V. G. Trukhanovsky

Winston CHURCHILL

Vladimir Trukhanovsky takes a Marxist look at Sir Winston Churchill and his time. His book is an attempt to analyse and interpret the part this prominent political leader of the 20th century played in the history of Britain and in international affairs.

Progress Publishers Moscow

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Translated from the Russian by *Kenneth Russell*,
Alex Miller (Chapter 11) and *Christopher English* (Chapters 12, 13)

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УИНСТОН ЧЕРЧИЛЛЬ

На английском языке

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

$\text{Т}\frac{11102-550}{014(01)-78}82-78$

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Chapter 1

The Boy and the Young Man

For many years Winston Chirchill's political opponents referred to him as "a young man in a hurry". This applies as much to his birth as to his style as a politician and statesman. He was so anxious to be born that he made his appearance two months prematurely, on 30 November 1874.

Although premature, the baby had energy to spare. He bawled so furiously, shattering the silence of Blenheim Palace, that the Duchess of Marlborough was utterly appalled and remarked: "After all, I have myself given life to quite a number of infants. They were all pretty vocal when they arrived. But such an earth-shaking noise as this newborn baby made I have never heard."

His hair was auburn-coloured. With his blunt and slightly turned-up nose, the child resembled his ancestors in the long line of Marlborough. He was christened Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. Winston's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough.

Churchill's first definitely established forebear is reckoned to be one John Churchill, who is known to have lived in the 17th century and to have been a Dorsetshire lawyer and an ardent Royalist. John Churchill married Sarah, the daughter of Sir Henry Winston of Gloucestershire. A son, Winston, was born to them in 1620, and at the age of twenty-two he joined the army and later fought on the side of King Charles I during the English bourgeois revolution of the 17th century.

In May 1643, during a lull in the fighting, Winston Churchill, who by that time had already risen to the rank of a captain of horse, married Elizabeth, the daughter of Lady Eleanor Drake, who was descended from the family of Sir Francis Drake—a characteristic figure of the period that saw the original accumulation of capital in England: he had managed to combine a career in the Royal Navy with outright piracy. Drake enjoyed the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I, and it was from her that he received his knighthood. Captain Churchill fought for the King, while his wife's family supported the revolutionary forces of Cromwell. Both sides agreed, however, that political differences should not impede the marriage.

The bourgeois revolution in England triumphed, Charles I was beheaded and the cause for which Captain Churchill had fought was lost. But the year 1660 brought a change. On 3 May King Charles II landed at Dover, and the monarchy was restored in England shortly after. Winston Churchill immediately set off for London to receive his reward for his loyalty to the monarchy. Eventually his persistence was rewarded. He was elected to Parliament, acquired a house in London, later secured a profitable post in Ireland and, after his return to England, served as a comptroller of the royal household. The King knighted him and granted him the right to have his own coat of arms. Nevertheless, Churchill considered that the royal largesse was not commensurate with his services, and so he chose for his coat of arms the motto *Fiel pero desdichado* ("faithful but unfortunate"). This is still the motto of the Churchill family.

Elizabeth Drake bore Winston Churchill twelve children. Seven of them died in infancy, but the survivors turned out to be extremely enterprising and achieved a great deal in life. Admittedly, the methods they employed were somewhat dubious. Their daughter Arabella and their son John, who was born in 1650, were particularly successful.

The author of one of the biographies of the modern Winston Churchill, Lewis Broad, writes that "the Churchills, like several other ducal houses, owed their initial fortunes to a woman's fall". The woman who brought success to the House of Churchill and assisted its rise to fame was Arabella Churchill. Her father managed, not without difficulty, to find her a place in the entourage of Charles II's brother, the Duke of York, later to be King James II. At first, Arabella made

little headway as a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of York. Her appearance was very unprepossessing: she was, as Lewis Broad tells us, "a tall, pale-faced creature ... nothing but skin and bone". But soon her position was to undergo a most unexpected change. This is recorded by a Frenchman, Count Grammont, who formed part of the Duke's entourage at the time. Once, while she was out riding, Arabella's horse set off at a gallop, and she lost her balance and fell off. "A fall in so quick a pace must have been violent," Grammont writes, "and yet it proved favourable to her in every respect: for, without receiving any hurt, she gave the lie to all the unfavourable suppositions that had been formed of her person, in judging from her face. The duke alighted, in order to help her.... Those who first crowded around her found her rather in a negligent posture. They could hardly believe that limbs of such exquisite beauty could belong to Miss Churchill's face. After this accident, it was remarked that the duke's tenderness and affection for her increased every day." Arabella's liaison with the Duke of York resulted in her bearing four children, who came to occupy prominent positions among the English aristocracy, and her brother John was launched into a splendid career.

At the age of only twenty-two, John Churchill was a cavalry captain, and two years later he became colonel of a regiment of dragoons. He was made a baron at the age of thirty-five. In June 1685 John Churchill gave proof of his abilities in a major enterprise. One of the pretenders to the English throne, the Duke of Monmouth, landed in the British Isles and advanced on Bristol. Winston Churchill and his son John immediately presented themselves to James II and offered their services. John Churchill was promoted on the spot to brigader-general and was ordered to put down the rebellion. In a battle fought on 6 July Monmouth was defeated, captured and later beheaded. Baron Churchill was made a major-general, and a few years later he became an earl.

John Churchill, or "Handsome Jack", as he was known at the time, founded the dynasty of the Dukes of Marlborough. He reached the peak of his career during the War of the Spanish Succession, when he commanded the Anglo-Dutch forces operating in Europe against France.

British historians generally seem to have a very soft spot for John Churchill, depicting him as a great commander, di-

plomat and national hero. But this is not the view taken by all historians.

He used his position as commander of the coalition forces in Europe not only to plunder the European mainland, but also to extort huge bribes in England herself. While he was taking bribes from the army suppliers, he and his wife were drawing from the Exchequer pay and appointments for the various lucrative posts they occupied totalling annually £64,325—a colossal sum for the time.

John Churchill was married to Sarah Jennings, an energetic and enterprising woman who had great influence over Queen Anne. The Queen lavished reward after reward on John Churchill. In 1702 she elevated him to the rank of duke, after which he took the title of first Duke of Marlborough. He was awarded a pension of £5,000 a year. But he had no land or estates. After the battle of Blenheim on 13 August 1704, where Marlborough commanded the forces which defeated France and her allies, he was given a large tract of land at Woodstock (Oxfordshire) and £500,000 for the purpose of building a sumptuous palace and refurbishing the estate. The park surrounding Blenheim Palace, which was named after the victorious battle extends across 15,000 acres. As a further reward for the victory at Blenheim, the German Emperor bestowed on the Duke of Marlborough the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Thanks to the abundant financial rewards from the state, to extortion and to the speculation in which the Duke of Marlborough indulged, he and his wife amassed a vast fortune which was later passed on to the Churchill family.

The first Duke of Marlborough died from a stroke in 1722. His descendants performed no outstanding deeds and earned no fame in history. Their activities and interest in state affairs did not extend beyond the bounds of the county in which their possessions were located. The Dukes of Marlborough proved to be great spenders of John Churchill's fortune. When the family eventually ran into financial difficulties, the young Marlboroughs began to improve their affairs by finding themselves rich American wives. The initiator of these profitable marriages was Randolph Churchill (1849-95), the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough and the father of Winston Churchill.

In 1873, when Randolph Churchill was 24, he met the family of the American millionaire Leonard Jerome as they

were travelling through Europe, and decided to marry one of the daughters, Jennie Jerome. Jennie's father was an energetic man who had no liking or wish for moderation in anything. His passions were divided between racehorses and opera singers. His wife was a beautiful American through whose veins coursed a fair amount of Red Indian blood.

In August 1873 the Duke of Marlborough received from his son Randolph a letter in which he wrote of his intention to marry Jennie Jerome. The Duke gave the news a very cool reception, but his son stubbornly refused to reconsider the matter. Randolph was nevertheless obliged to accept his father's condition to postpone the marriage until he was elected Member of Parliament for the Woodstock constituency, the area in which Blenheim Palace was situated and where the Dukes of Marlborough were in firm control. Randolph was duly elected, of course, and he married Jennie Jerome in April 1874. The dowry he received amounted to £50,000, which yielded him an annual income of some £3,000. From his father Randolph received £1,100 a year, as well as a comfortable house in London. During this period Randolph Churchill's interests were confined to the fashionable life that he and his young wife led in London.

On 30 November 1874 their first child appeared—a son, to whom they gave all the traditional family names: Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. Winston received the name of Leonard from his American grandfather, Leonard Jerome.

Winston grew up in his father's house in London and was in the constant care of his nurse, Mrs. Everest. His young parents took no interest in him. It was the tradition in England at the time that people belonging to such elevated circles did not bring up their own children.

Young Winston's birth gave rise to alarm at Blenheim. The point was that his father's elder brother, the Marquis of Blandford and the future eighth Duke of Marlborough, had only one son, so that, if anything were to happen to this sole heir, the title and the estate of the Dukes of Marlborough would be inherited by Winston Churchill. For over twenty years Winston remained eligible to inherit the title and family seat of the Marlboroughs. In 1895, when the eighteen-year-old Consuelo Vanderbilt, the daughter of a well-known American millionaire, arrived at Blenheim as the wife of the ninth Duke of Marlborough, the old Duchess—the grandmother of her husband and Winston Churchill—impressed on

her: "Your first duty is to have a child and it must be a son, because it would be intolerable to have that little upstart Winston become Duke." Consuelo successfully accomplished the mission assigned to her, and Winston thereby lost the opportunity of ever becoming Duke of Marlborough. He probably had no regrets later on. His ambition looked to greater horizons and would not have been satisfied by a mere title.

Winston's mother was not liked at Blenheim. This probably came about because she surpassed the titled ladies of the palace in appearance and charm, intelligence and vivacity. Randolph and his wife preferred to live in London.

London society welcomed the young pair with open arms. This was made easy by Jennie's beauty and wit, and by the excellent manners she had acquired during the many years which she and her mother had spent in Paris, where they were received in the highest circles. Jennie was also a fine pianist, a talented artist and a writer of interesting and refined letters. The Churchills' house was visited by the cream of the English aristocracy. The Conservative leader and Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, was a frequent caller.

There was soon, however, to be a radical change in the young couple's position in aristocratic London society.

What happened was that Randolph's elder brother, the Marquis of Blandford, the heir to the title and the estate of the Dukes of Marlborough and a married man with children, began to persistently seek the favours of Lady Edith Aylesford. This particular young lady also came in for considerable attention from the Prince of Wales, the son of Queen Victoria and the heir to the throne (the future King Edward VII). The Prince secured the services of Lord Aylesford and required his company during an official visit to India. Taking advantage of their absence, the Marquis of Blandford pursued his designs so assidiously that, when the travellers returned to London, a public scandal broke out. The Prince of Wales demanded that Lord Aylesford initiate divorce proceedings on the grounds of his wife's conduct with the Marquis. This meant that the heir to the title of the Dukes of Marlborough would be disgraced. Moreover, the Prince also insisted that the Marquis should divorce his wife and marry Lady Aylesford, which the Marquis categorically refused to contemplate. The situation was soon to be further

complicated by the fact that Edith Aylesford gave birth to a child.

The society world was split from top to bottom: some people sympathised with Blandford, while others sided with the heir to the throne. Randolph Churchill resolutely upheld his brother's cause, exhibited a singular lack of restraint on his behalf and committed a grave error. He issued the threat that, if the case ever reached court, he would "bring to light some friendly letters which had escaped the Prince's pen and memory". The letters in question contained protestations of love from the Prince to Edith Aylesford. This attempt to intimidate the heir to the throne was an act of supreme daring and so, naturally, infuriated the Prince. Using a secretary as go-between, he challenged Randolph to a duel. Churchill replied that he would fight any nominee, but could not lift his sword against his future sovereign. After this, the Prince declared that he would not enter any house that received Randolph Churchill. Needless to say, no one wished to risk an open rupture with the court, and all doors slammed shut in the face of Randolph and his wife. Fashionable society scrupulously observed the boycott.

This was a disaster for the Churchills. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, helped to find a temporary respite. He offered Randolph's father, the Duke of Marlborough, the post of Viceroy in Ireland so that he could take Randolph away with him as his private secretary. Although the position entailed considerable expenditure, no other solution was in sight, and the Duke accepted the Prime Minister's offer. He set off for Dublin together with his son and daughter-in-law. There they lived for a total of three years, until in 1880 Gladstone's Liberal Government came to office and relieved the Duke of the post.

Concluding that all possibility of ever shining in fashionable society had now been denied to him once and for all, Randolph Churchill conceived a deadly hatred for society. But no one can live on hatred alone, and he found it necessary to occupy his mind, especially since he regarded himself as being a highly talented and even brilliant man, capable of great achievements. He combined a fierce wish to take the greatest possible revenge on the society that had so cruelly spurned him with the wish to prove his superiority by accomplishing something truly extraordinary. This ambitious desire prompted him to engage in politics and to seek great

power. Historians note that Randolph Churchill first became seriously interested in politics in Ireland. He frequently voiced the demand that the Irish Question should be resolved forthwith and that Parliament should adopt legislation that would be seen in Ireland as conciliatory. At the time, Randolph was not a political figure of any consequence, and these declarations passed unnoticed. They did, admittedly, cause some inconvenience to his father, who remarked, in a letter to one of his friends, that probably Randolph had either been drunk or temporarily taken leave of his senses when he made such statements.

Randolph took his two-year-old son to Dublin with him, but here too his parents found no time for him. Little Winnie (as Winston Churchill was affectionately called even in his old age) was left completely in the care of nurses and governesses. He grew to be a strong but far from attractive child. He had a major speech defect: he stammered and lisped, but this did not prevent him from being extremely talkative. He possessed a heightened degree of self-confidence and obstinacy.

Winston had a fine memory, but he assimilated very easily and quickly only what happened to interest him. He took a dislike to figures during his early schooldays and was never reconciled with mathematics thereafter. He hated Classics, and in the course of many years he mastered only a smattering of Latin and formed a shaky knowledge of the Greek alphabet.

As a child and then a young man, Churchill lived through a crucial period for Britain. The third quarter of the nineteenth century saw the zenith of British achievement: it was the golden age of Victoria. British industry was the most advanced and powerful at the time. Effectively, Britain enjoyed a monopoly position in the world market and became the "workshop of the world", to which other countries delivered raw materials and purchased the commodities produced in the British Isles. Britain ruled the most extensive colonial possessions in the world. All this brought enormous profits to the British bourgeoisie which, consequently, became the bankers of the world, and London became its financial centre. The gold of the City amounted to the blood and sweat of many millions of colonial slaves and millions of working people in other countries, with which Britain maintained inequitable economic relations benefiting

one side only. But, more than this, it was the blood and sweat of the British working class. During the period, however, certain improvements were made in the position of the workers, affecting mainly the better-paid men. Frightened by the Chartist movement and the revolutionary developments in Europe, the British bourgeoisie preferred to dip into their vast profits and spend a fairly small proportion on improving the plight of the better-placed members of the working class.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century Britain's position had begun to take a fundamental turn for the worse. However, in 1874, when Winston Churchill was born, even the wisest bourgeois statesmen were not aware of the direction in which Britain would develop or of difficulties and dangers that the country would have to face in the decades to come.

The last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century saw Britain's transition towards imperialism. Specifically, her position at the time seemed sound enough. Yet new tendencies in world development were already discernible. The young industrial powers of Germany and the United States of America had now joined the race. They forged rapidly ahead, and Britain fell further and further behind them in terms of the rate of industrial growth.

The new economic and political circumstances compelled the British political parties to undertake a thorough-going restructuring of their activities. The Conservatives and the Liberals found it necessary to search for new ideas so as to buttress their influence over a growing electorate in changing conditions. New organisational forms of party political activity were also being devised.

After their electoral defeat in 1880 the Conservatives began to look around for the cause. The arguments that were only to be expected in the circumstances broke out between the party's leaders. The situation was further complicated by the death of Benjamin Disraeli, the recognised leader of the Conservatives. The party contained no one of equal calibre. By this time the Duke of Marlborough and Randolph Churchill had returned from Ireland. Randolph decided to take advantage of the situation in the Conservative Party in order to make his début in the political arena and to seek to achieve his ambitious objectives.

Randolph embraced no definite political principles. He

did not regard what he said as being terribly important: the important thing was that his pronouncements should bring him popularity and propel him towards power. Taking account of the general situation, Randolph, in the first place, voiced new ideas which would, he thought, restore the status of the Conservative Party in the eyes of the electorate, and, in the second place, led the drive to improve the party's organisational structure so as to ensure that it functioned, as he put it, in the interests of the people.

It would be wrong to claim that Randolph Churchill's pronouncements amounted to no more than self-advancing rhetoric. He drew up his proposals in accordance with the feelings that were then uppermost in a particular section of the Conservative Party. The conduct of electoral campaigns entailed a great deal of expense and effort on the part of the Conservative Party's branch organisations. Yet, whenever victorious Conservative leaders carved up the state and distributed government posts, there was always very little left over for the second echelon of party leaders. They had to be content with the moral satisfaction of having some prominent party leader shake their hand and thank them for the help they had given to the Conservative cause. Randolph was aware of this dissatisfaction in the ranks with the dominating position held by the group of old leaders, or the "old gang", as he called them, and he played on it skilfully.

Randolph Churchill immediately attracted attention through daring speeches in which he insultingly denounced the leaders of the Conservative Party as well as members of the Liberal Government. The campaign which he led against the recognised leaders of his own party soon spread from the House of Commons to the newspapers and public meetings. Randolph's speeches and articles gained him great popularity very quickly. However, he had only a handful of followers in Parliament, and their support was somewhat less than sincere. Together with them, he founded the so-called "Fourth Party".

After Disraeli's death the Conservative Party leadership was, in effect, in the hands of two people: Lord Salisbury, who led the Conservatives in the House of Lords, and his counterpart in the Commons, Sir Stafford Northcote. Churchill opposed this division of the role of leader among two people. Clearly longing for the position of Conservative leader, which would automatically give him the post of Prime

Minister if the party won at the polls, Randolph demanded that the "collective leadership" should be abolished. He declared that the party was rich in gifted people among whom it would not be difficult to find a capable leader. Everyone saw that Randolph was referring to himself and that he intended to capture the party leadership. He was thirty-four at the time.

Parliamentary reforms had increased the electorate and, in order to secure a majority in the ballot box, the Conservatives were obliged to flirt with the better-off section of the working class and with the petty bourgeoisie. Consequently, their policy. statements had, to some extent, to reflect the interests of that particular section of the electorate.

Randolph Churchill was persistent in his efforts to woo the working class. Disraeli's demagogic addresses had called in glowing terms for an alliance between all classes in order to preserve state institutions, but Randolph went a stage further. "The Conservative Party will never gain power," he said, "until it gains the confidence of the working classes.... Our interests are perfectly safe in their hands if we will trust them.... You must invite them to a share and a real share in the party government."

In much the same vein, Churchill and his associates demanded that members of various classes should be permitted to lead the Conservative Party and that the monopoly influence exerted on party affairs by the group of aristocratic leaders should be ended. In 1882 the *Fortnightly Review* featured an article in which Churchill's two closest associates, Henry Wolff and John Gorst, outlined something resembling a programme for the group. "If the Tory party is to continue to exist as a power in State," they wrote, "it must become a popular party.... Unfortunately for Conservatism, its leaders belong solely to one class; they are a clique composed of members of the aristocracy, landowners, and adherents whose chief merit is subserviency.... They half fear and half despise the common people, whom they see only through this deceptive medium."

The article went on to point out that it was the local Conservative associations which had recently been set up that had brought about electoral victory, but that, "as soon as success was achieved, the men who had stood aloof since 1868 rushed in to share the spoils. A ministry was formed

composed almost exclusively of peers and country members. Those by whom the campaign had been planned and fought were forgotten.... Social influence became predominant....

"Independence of political thought was visited by the severest punishment....

"The Conservative associations, as natural consequence of these things, steadily declined; their vitality was gone.

"Those by whom the work prior to 1874 was silently performed gradually withdrew to make way for noisier partisans, whose main purpose was not to advance the Conservative cause but to recommend themselves to the leaders of the Conservative party. The defeat of 1880 astonished the autocratic section as much as the victory of 1874. It was no surprise to those acquainted with the temper of that great section of the party whose voice never reached the leaders' ears." The article emphasised that "the entire organisation of the Tory party must undergo a radical revolution".

Randolph was leading the attack against the aristocratic clique that dominated the party even though he himself was a typical member of the English aristocracy, the son of a duke. Logically, then, if the demands formulated by Randolph were carried out, this would have excluded people like himself from the party leadership. But this was just a tactical move. Randolph wished to replace the "old gang" with a new group of party leaders which he himself would dominate. Randolph's plan became perfectly transparent as soon as he decided that the goal was in sight. Having been elected President of the National Union of Conservative Associations and certain that he would soon become leader of the party, he discarded the clarion call to democratise the Conservative Party leadership.

Randolph Churchill made broad use of slogans borrowed from the Liberal arsenal. In particular, he liked to say: "Trust the people, and they will trust you! " At the same time, echoing Disraeli, Randolph talked a great deal about "Tory democracy", even though he had no very clear idea of what the concept actually meant. "I am always in a fright," he once admitted to a friend, "lest someone should put it to me publicly. I believe it is principally opportunism." However, on another occasion he provided a rather cynical definition: "Tory democracy is a democracy which supports the Tories."

Many Conservatives accepted what Randolph and other

"Fourth Party" leaders said at its face value. That was how he managed to secure election as President of the National Union of Conservative Associations. Alongside the official party machine, Randolph set up an unofficial party organisation known as the Primrose League. It aimed to revive the party in accordance with Disraeli's ideas. Events appeared to be developing just as Randolph had planed: a little more time would pass, and he would replace Salisbury as party leader and then become Prime Minister.

The Conservative leaders were keeping a very close watch on what Randolph Churchill was doing. From time to time, for purely tactical reasons, they were obliged to retreat and to agree to his advancement, but they were patiently awaiting the moment when he would put himself into a position that would finish him as a politician once and for all. His recklessness, boundless conceit, total disregard for his associates, and his urge for self-advancement were driving away from him more and more people who would otherwise have supported him. In 1884 Arthur Balfour, Salisbury's nephew and the future Prime Minister, said: "I, on the other hand, am inclined to think that we should avoid, as far as possible, all 'rows', until Randolph puts himself entirely and flagrantly in the wrong by some act of Party disloyalty which everybody can understand and nobody can deny."

The Conservatives emerged victorious from the Parliamentary elections of 1886. It would be wrong to think that their success was due only to the rhetoric of Randolph Churchill and the "Fourth Party". On the other hand, it is beyond doubt that the activation of the Conservative Party brought about by the campaign that Randolph led was one of the factors in the Conservative victory.

In the government that Salisbury subsequently formed, Randolph Churchill was given the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, i.e. he was second only to the Prime Minister. He also became Leader of the House of Commons. At the age of thirty-five, Randolph occupied second place in the Government, and it seemed that very soon he would be able to take the final step and grasp supreme power. When, in November 1885, a friend asked him how he visualised the future, he replied: "I shall lead the Opposition for five years. Then I shall be Prime Minister for five years. Then I shall die."

In December 1886 Randolph Churchill called for a cut in military expenditure. The Admiralty agreed, but the War

Office refused to comply. Randolph tried to frighten Salisbury by threatening to resign. He had already employed this means of putting pressure on the Prime Minister twice before, and twice Salisbury had given way. Randolph was absolutely sure that Salisbury would yield this time too. However, the old Conservative leader had his own plans. He resolved to fight Randolph. Salisbury took him at his word, and the impatient careerist had no option but to resign.

Randolph Churchill imagined that his resignation would cause a wave of indignation in the Conservative Party and that Salisbury would be asked to accept Randolph's proposal concerning the military budget and to reinstate him in the Government. If that happened, Salisbury himself would be obliged to retire. This would have heralded Randolph's final triumph: he would probably have become leader of the party and would have replaced Salisbury as Prime Minister.

Only this can explain why, after writing his letter of resignation on 22 December 1886, Randolph went immediately to the office of *The Times*, where he informed the editor of the sensational news and gave him permission to publish forthwith. Randolph undoubtedly imagined that this piece of news would give rise to a Conservative mutiny against Salisbury. But he had made a gross miscalculation: no mutiny ensued, and Randolph found himself thrown from the bridge of the Conservative ship, while the vessel carried on its way regardless. As Randolph's personal secretary at the Exchequer put it, "he has thrown himself from the top of the ladder and he will never reach it again". George Goschen was appointed Chancellor in place of Randolph. When Randolph was subsequently asked why he had risked resignation, which marked the end of his political career, he replied: "All great men make mistakes. Napoleon forgot Blücher. I forgot Goschen." In fact, Goschen had nothing to do with it. But the remark is interesting for the light it sheds on Randolph's estimation of himself. And so the lightning political career of Winston Churchill's father came to an end.

Randolph Churchill had great difficulty in tolerating his enforced political idleness. Moreover, his health was rapidly deteriorating. He tried to play an active part in the Conservative Party and spoke at meetings and other functions; but fewer and fewer people listened to him, and the press gave him scant coverage. Randolph sought distraction in travel. In 1887 he went to Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey and Italy,

and later he took his wife to Russia and Germany. Three years later he travelled to Egypt, and in 1891 to South Africa. From Africa he sent a number of very remunerative but rather dull articles to the *Daily Graphic*. When the popularity of the Salisbury Government and the Conservative Party began to wane in 1890, Randolph was full of malicious glee. The declining prestige of the Conservatives even gave rise to shouts of "Bring Randolph back! " in some Conservative quarters. But Salisbury remained adamant, and Randolph's supporters had no substantial following. Randolph was furious. The Conservatives were defeated in the elections of 1892, and the Liberal leader, William Gladstone, replaced Salisbury as Prime Minister. Randolph was very pleased with the turn of events. Now that the Conservatives were back in Opposition, he hoped that they would look to him for help. But all this was self-deception. Without suspecting it himself, Randolph had long been a political corpse.

His physical strength was also giving out. The summer of 1882 saw the lengthy onset of a serious illness. Care, treatment and fresh air restored his strength somewhat. But the doctors' diagnosis—creeping paralysis—heralded the imminent and unavoidable end.

Meanwhile little Winnie was having a rather complicated time. At the age of seven, he was handed over to a preparatory boarding school in Ascot. It was a fashionable and very expensive school, proud of its long-standing traditions. Winnie found life very hard here. The school devoted considerably more attention to character training than to formal instruction. Winston, who had already shown signs of his extreme stubbornness, evinced a total reluctance to abide by the unbending rules and discipline that the teachers zealously applied. He was soon to find out from bitter experience the consequences of disobedience. Once a week, the boys assembled in the library, and the most recalcitrant of them were singled out and mercilessly thrashed in the next room. Naturally, it was not long before Winnie was getting his full share of the canings. All this came as a great shock to him. For many years he preserved his hatred for the school and for the headmaster who had beaten him. At the age of eighteen, when he was a cadet at Sandhurst, Winston went to Ascot in order to settle scores with his old tormentor. By that time, however, the headmaster had died, and the school was closed.

His stay at Ascot adversely affected Winnie's health, and, at the recommendation of the family doctor, he was transferred to a preparatory school in Brighton. Here everything was completely different. He was no longer threatened with corporal punishment, although his attitude towards discipline remained exactly as it had been. The teachers at Brighton later remembered him as the stubbornest and naughtiest of pupils. Here Winnie made his first acquaintance with French and history, learnt a great deal of poetry by heart and also learnt to swim and ride, which was particularly to his liking.

Winston spent more than three years at Brighton, and this period was intended to prepare him for transfer to a public school. He was sent not to Eton, but to Harrow—a departure from family tradition. The reason, according to biographers, was that Eton was situated in a damp, low-lying area, while Harrow was on higher ground. The location of Harrow was considered to be more favourable to Winston's weak chest. However, his lack of discipline may have influenced the decision as much as climatic considerations, since he would obviously have been unable to cope with the demands made of scholars at Eton. Life at Harrow was a little easier.

Churchill later recalled that the years spent at Harrow constituted "the only barren and unhappy period of my life". He had a lot of unpleasant things to contend with there. They began with the entrance examination. Candidates had to produce a piece of written work in Latin. Winston himself ironically tells us how he managed in the course of two hours to write down the number of the question, put brackets around it and then add to it a big blot and several smudges. And that was all. Despite this rather undistinguished performance, Winston was accepted.

His progress at school was not impressive. He obstinately refused to learn Latin, even though Classics was regarded at Harrow as the main subject. Winston's total reluctance or inability to cope with the classical languages meant that he had no prospects of making any progress in his studies and subsequently going on to university. He was the school's worst pupil and was considered obtuse and incapable. However, his contemporaries and later biographers both agree that Churchill's backwardness at school was caused only by his boundless obstinacy. At Harrow it was noticed that he had inherited his father's retentive memory. Once, to the

amazement of masters and pupils, he received a prize for memorising and faultlessly reciting twelve hundred lines of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome.* He knew by heart lengthy scenes from Shakespeare's plays and would never pass over any occasion for correcting a teacher if he made a mistake when quoting from *Othello* or *Hamlet.*

Winston would only study those subjects that he wanted to, and he rejected all the others. He even selected the teachers for whom he was willing to work, and refused to do anything for those he did not like. He broke just about every rule of conduct that was established by teachers and pupils alike. It is recorded that on one occasion the Headmaster had to reprimand him. "Churchill," the Headmaster once said to him, "I have very grave reason to be displeased with you"—"And I, Sir," replied the boy, "have very grave reason to be displeased with you! "

Winston's parents were very dissatisfied with their son's poor progress at school. His father concluded that the boy was not clever enough to read for the Bar. But if not law, what else was there to turn to? The answer, apparently, was provided by chance. Winston liked to stage mock battles with his brother John. He had up to fifteen hundred lead soldiers, which he would deploy with great skill and inventiveness. Lord Randolph once came into the room where the children were engaged in yet another battle. Seeing what his sons were up to, he asked Winston whether he would like to go into the Army. His son thought at that moment that it would be splendid to command an army and so he said "yes" at once. This incident made the parents' decision a foregone conclusion: Winston's last years at Harrow were spent in the Army class, which was intended to prepare the boys for entry to military school.

Despite determined preparation, Winston twice failed his entrance examinations for Sandhurst, the famous Royal Military College. After the second failure the family decided to adopt an extreme measure in order to push him into Sandhurst. He left Harrow and was placed in the care of a certain Captain James, who ran a very interesting establishment. His school specialised in coaching young men who did not possess sufficient ability or knowledge so that they would then pass entrance examinations at military colleges. As Churchill recalled in his memoirs, "it was said that no one who was not a congenital idiot could avoid passing thence

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into the Army". Since the teachers had a perfect knowledge of all the questions that might come up in the entrance examinations, James's establishment made a thorough job of drumming model answers into the minds of its customers.

Winston was already prepared to make use of the James method, but he was prevented by an accident. Carried away by a game he was playing, he jumped from a bridge into a pine tree growing alongside, hoping to reach the ground by sliding down through the branches. He had, however, miscalculated: the tree turned out to be very tall, and he hit the ground and was knocked unconscious. He suffered severe concussion, did not regain consciousness for three days and only left his bed after three months.

It took a year for his health to be fully restored. Since he remained at his parents' house during this period, Winston came into contact with numerous high-ranking politicians who were frequent callers at the Churchill home. Conversation revolved almost exclusively around political matters.

It was then that Winston began to take an interest in politics. After he had recovered, he started to visit the House of Commons when it was in session and to follow the debates taking place there. The boy pondered his father's unfortunate position. He probably concluded from conversations he overheard that his father's resignation from the Salisbury government had been a tragic and irremediable mistake. Young Winston began to toy with the idea that his father would at some time make a political comeback, and then he himself would take up politics and would support his father in all his battles.

When he was well again, Winston followed Captain James's course and made his third attempt to enter Sandhurst. At last, in August 1893, he was admitted to the college; unfortunately, though, it was not the infantry school that he entered, as his father had planned. Despite the conscientious efforts made by Captain James, Winston's knowledge was only sufficient to gain him entrance to the cavalry school. In the cavalry such factors as ability and knowledge were of secondary importance. In the infantry an officer had only himself to maintain. But in the cavalry an officer's maintenance costs were higher, and he also had to have several horses for his duties, for sport and for hunting. As a result, there were considerably fewer candidates to join the cavalry, and everything depended, by and large, on

whether the would-be cavalry officer could afford to meet the costs involved.

Again Winston sorely wounded his father's self-esteem. It was not just a matter of the free-spending Churchill's financial worries—and now the added burden of maintaining a future cavalry officer. More important was the fact that, in his belief that his son would eventually make the grade and become an infantry officer, Randolph Churchill had already written to the Duke of Connaught, the Colonel-in-Chief of the 60th Rifles, requesting him to reserve a place in the regiment for Winston. The Duke had agreed to the suggestion. Now, however, the offer had to be declined—and for the humiliating reason, moreover, that his son had been unable to pass the examinations necessary for infantry service. This came as a grave blow to Randolph Churchill, who saw it as a great humiliation. He wrote an angry letter to his son, warning him that he was in danger of becoming a "social wastrel".

Winston loved his father and was very hurt by the letter. In his memoirs, however, Churchill writes about all the vicissitudes of his entry to Sandhurst with gentle irony. Admittedly, these memoirs were written thirty years after the events described, when he had already become a major British statesman and could afford to write ironically of the establishment run by Captain James.

Winston enjoyed his time at Sandhurst. There was no longer any mention of loathesome Latin, Greek or any of the other despised subjects that had made his life at Harrow such a misery. No particular strain was imposed on his intellect here, although he did read many books on the conduct of war. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suppose that Winston was given a thorough theoretical grounding in the art of war at Sandhurst. After all, it was not the staff college that he was attending, but only the cavalry school with its eighteen-month course. The theoretical training matched the general level of the course. Churchill thoroughly enjoyed the practical sessions on the racecourse, and his enthusiasm for riding and his love of horses were to last for many years. He now dreamed of a glorious military career, equalling that of his ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough. The only thing that worried the future cavalry officer was the fact that, at the time (it was the end of the nineteenth century), the world was suffering from a lack of major wars that might give

him the opportunity to show his prowess and achieve great renown. "Luckily, however," he later recalled, "there were still savages and barbarous peoples. There were Zulus and Afghans, also the Dervishes of the Soudan. Some of these might, if they were well-disposed, 'put up a show' some day. There might even be a mutiny or a revolt in India." He even imagined himself commanding troops on the plains of India, winning medals and distinction, and rising to very high command just like Clive, the British colonial administrator and military commander who started the process of turning India into a British colony.

Meanwhile his father's health continued to deteriorate. On 24 January 1895 Randolph Churchill died at the age of 46. A few weeks later his son Winston passed out of the cavalry school as a lieutenant and was gazetted to the 4th Hussars. The prospect of a military career stretched invitingly before him. He had stepped on to the lowest rung of the ladder.

Chapter 2

In Search of a Vocation

Both Churchill himself and his biographers dwell lovingly on the fact that Winston had to come to terms with poverty as he embarked on an independent life. It is legitimate to ask, though, whether his poverty was as extreme as it is depicted. It is true that Randolph did nothing to increase the family fortune. After his death the family had to sell their shares in order to settle accumulated debts. The debts were discharged, and the family still had the income that Winston's mother received from the dowry she had brought from America. It was a sum sufficiently large to enable the charming and vivacious young widow to lead a gay life in the highest circles of London society. As Churchill himself said, the income from the marriage settlement "was quite enough for comfort, ease, and pleasure".

Winston's army pay amounted to fourteen shillings a day, and, of course, he needed far more than this in order to share the life enjoyed by his fellow officers. His mother gave him an allowance of £500 a year, paid in quarterly instalments. This was a princely sum for the time, but the youn hussar still found himself short of funds. Service life was easy-going, there was entertainment galore, and five months in every year were spent on leave anyway. This sort of existence called for a great deal of money.

Churchill often said that he had fought his way to the top and had gained his position in society single-handed, having

started with virtually nothing. Needless to say, this is something of an exaggeration. He did not inherit a great fortune, but he found it relatively easy to start his career and to make progress, since he enjoyed powerful support. The Marlborough family, Churchill's mother and Winston himself had far-reaching connections in high places. They extended into the court, aristocratic circles, the Conservative and Liberal party leadership, and the cream of the intellectual and artistic community. Jennie Churchill was received by Queen Victoria at Windsor, she was on friendly terms with members of the Royal Family, and the Churchills entertained George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

Finding herself alone, Churchill's mother brought all her energy and resources to bear on advancing her son's career. All her connections became geared towards this end. "She opened the doors for her son," one of his later biographers writes, "and smoothed the paths for him." It should therefore be recognised that, while not being in the direct line of descent of the Dukes of Marlborough, Churchill was nevertheless born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

If Winston had been the heir to the dukedom, he would have inherited the title and the estate, but he would have been obliged to confine his activities to the House of Lords. In other words, he would not have made a great political career. He would undoubtedly have been impeded by a surfeit of wealth and material comforts—which usually discourages effort—and also by the fact that in the twentieth century the titled scions of aristocratic families were no longer eligible to head His, or Her, Majesty's Government. The development of political life in Britain called for a greater democratisation of the façade of state power. Being thus compelled to make an independent political career for himself, Winston was given the opportunity to display his undoubtedly exceptional abilities. Eventually he achieved great success, of a kind that would have been out of the question if his circumstances had been different.

In the meantime, however, Winston discovered that routine service in the Army, with its slow and orderly progression through all the stages of a military career, was not for him. Sluggish advancement did not appeal to his nature; he fretted to gain influence and power as quickly as possible. Winston was extremely ambitious throughout his life. Elbowing his way ungraciously through allies and rivals

alike, and making no secret of his conviction that they were all inferior to him, he made far more enemies and opponents than if he had moved through the grades of government service in the normal way. These tactics would probably have proved disastrous for him, as they did for his father, if he had had to deal with stronger or more talented people, and if fate and chance had not smiled on him.

In 1895 Spanish troops under Marshal Martinez Campos were sent to Cuba in order to suppress the local people's national liberation struggle against Spanish rule. The struggle had by then developed into guerrilla warfare. Together with Lieutenant Reginald Barnes, a friend of his, Winston decided to spend some of his five-month leave catching a whiff of gunpowder in Cuba. This trip, however, would have to be sanctioned by the Spanish Government. Lieutenant Churchill wrote to the British Ambassador in Madrid, who had been a friend of his father's and the Ambassador obtained the necessary permission for him. If it had been anyone other than the son of Randolph Churchill and the grandson of the Duke of Marlborough, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador would probably not have taken up the matter, and the young hussar would not have had the opportunity of visiting the Cuban front.

Winston began to make his fortune before he embarked seriously on his political career. Before leaving for Cuba, he offered his services as a war correspondent to the *Daily Graphic*. The Cuban insurrection was not a matter of great interest to the British public, yet Winston's proposal was accepted. He was to be paid £5 for each article. Compared with the money Churchill earned in later years, this sum is quite insignificant, but it was no lower than the fee that was usually paid even to very experienced journalists. Yet Winston had not as yet published a single line, and no one knew whether he would be able to provide interesting copy or not. So why did the paper conclude an agreement with a young hussar who was completely untried in journalism? The answer is supplied by Peter De Mendelssohn, one of Churchill's biographers: "It is also quite certain that his name and his mother's social connexions gave him, from the very start, a considerable advantage over his colleagues in Fleet Street."

In November 1895 Churchill and Barnes sailed to New York, and from there they travelled to Havana. The Spanish

authorities gave them a very courteous reception. The two lieutenants spent three days with a Spanish relief column in the Cuban jungle. The column did not undertake any major military operations, but the young hussars did come under fire. Having thus seen something of war, Churchill and Barnes sailed back to England. Between 13 December 1895 and 13 January 1896 Winston managed to send the *Daily Graphic* five articles, and they were all duly published. His début in war and journalism thus passed off quite successfully. He was even decorated with the Spanish Military Medal. In Cuba Churchill acquired a passion for cigars and adopted the Spanish custom of the siesta.

Winston began to lead an independent life at a time when Britain was expanding and consolidating her colonial monopoly. The British Empire was growing quickly. In 1880 it had an area of some 20 million square kilometres and a population of 200 million, whereas by the close of the century the area had grown to 33 million square kilometres, and the population in 1900 stood at 370 million. Since there were 37 million people in Britain herself in 1901, one can see that every Briton had 10 colonial slaves working for him overseas.

Britain's aggressive colonial policy intensified the contradictions between herself and the other imperialist powers (Germany, France, the United States and Russia), on the one hand, and on the other, encountered growing resistance from the colonial peoples. A bitter struggle was mounting in Ireland, the oldest of England's colonies. The British authorities' brutal repression and persecution of Irish patriots provided only a temporary respite. Ruling circles in Britain were fully aware that the status quo could not be maintained indefinitely, and were looking round for a compromise that would go some way towards satisfying the Irish, while enabling British rule over them to continue. The end of the century saw a growth in the national liberation movement in India, especially in the country's northern areas, which were difficult of access for the British administration. In 1881 war broke out in the Sudan against the British invaders, who were heavily defeated. In Africa Britain was at the time the power pursuing the most vigorous policy of territorial acquisition. All these events predetermined the geographical areas in which Lieutenant Churchill was to be active over the coming years.

In the autumn of 1896 Winston's regiment, the 4th Hussars, was sent to India. While disembarking at Bombay, he had an accident. As he approached the shore in a small boat over a rough sea, he made a grab with his right hand at a large metal ring driven into the quayside. The boat slid away from beneath him, Winston was left hanging by his hand and he dislocated his shoulder. The injury plagued him constantly thereafter, and he made very limited use of his right arm. He was an enthusiastic polo-player and was greatly dismayed to find that the dislocation prevented him from developing his sporting capabilities to the full. More importantly, however, the weakness of his right arm stopped him using the cavalryman's traditional sabre, and he had to exchange his sword for an automatic Mauser pistol.

The 4th Hussars formed part of the garrison in Bangalore. The climate in this region of India was splendid, and service life there was easy. The young lieutenant lived in a separate cottage, and he had several polo ponies of his own and a groom to look after them. He himself was attended by a butler and a serving boy. Such was the staff of a lieutenant who was just starting his military career.

Playing polo was the officers' chief pastime. Any other activity, including the performance of military duties, was regarded as nothing more than an annoying interval in a polo match. Winston was indifferent towards his military occupations, but was a keen polo-player. He had to strap the upper part of his right arm tightly to his side so that any pain in his dislocated shoulder would not interfere with his game.

The officers' duties and training for polo matches still left a great deal of spare time, which they employed in different ways. During the hottest part of the day, Churchill's regimental companions either slept, or played cards, or sipped cold whisky and soda. To his credit, Winston did not care for such an existence. Whenever he was off duty and off the polo field, he preferred to read. He had probably realised by then that he was totally uneducated and that if he was to accomplish his ambitious designs, he needed at 'east a modicum of knowledge in certain fields.

Winston asked his mother to send books on history, philosophy, religion and economics. Jennie was delighted and sent parcel after parcel of the works of Gibbon and Macaulay, Plato and Schopenhauer, Lecky and Malthus, Darwin and many others. "From November to May,"

Churchill was to write later, "I read four or five hours every day history and philosophy." In fact, this is not such a great deal if one bears in mind his low starting point. Yet in a very short time Winston was able to extract a large amount from these books. His industriousness, enormous capacity for work, and ability to concentrate his attention and will power on attaining a selected goal, coupled with his outstanding natural gifts, enabled Winston subsequently to become the intellectual equal of university graduates.

Later, at the age of seventy-six, Churchill commented: "I never had the advantage of a university education. But it is a great privilege and the more widely extended, the better for any country." Obviously, these words were delivered tongue in cheek, since he was perfectly well aware of the benefits of university training. Once, having returned to London on leave from India, he wondered whether he ought to go to Oxford or Cambridge so as to receive a proper, systematic education of the sort that could not be replaced by the independent study of books. But he abandoned the project for the simple reason that university entrance requirements stipulated a knowledge of the Classical languages and other subjects towards which he still maintained an unassailable apathy.

Churchill was particularly attracted towards history. He studied the works of Macaulay and Gibbon with great enthusiasm and was totally enthralled by them. Edward Gibbon's pompous, high-flown and majestic style exerted a powerful influence on Churchill's own developing style.

But Winston did not devote all his energy to self-education. He craved by nature for furious and resolute activity, and an opportunity for this soon presented itself. A rising was mounted by one of the Pathan tribes near the Malakand Pass on India's north-eastern frontier. An expeditionary force consisting of three brigades commanded by Sir Bindon Blood was being sent to put down the rebellion. Winston, who already knew Sir Bindon, requested him to take him along on the expedition. There was no room for him on the staff, and so Sir Bindon suggested that Winston should take part in the campaign as a war correspondent. Accordingly, Lieutenant Churchill was granted leave of absence from his regiment, and he contracted to cover the campaign for the Allahabad *Pioneer*. At the same time Jennie Churchill arranged with the *Daily Telegraph* in London that her son would send reports from India.

The expedition was a tough one. The insurgents offered fierce resistance, and the British sustained heavy losses. Churchill found himself fighting a real battle, and he showed himself to be a vigorous and resourceful commander, displaying singular personal bravery. His articles in both newspapers demonstrated a sound grasp of the overall situation on the North-East Frontier.

His reports, signed "A Young Officer", were well received by the public, and this prompted him to use the material he had assembled during the campaign as the foundation, as he later remarked, on which "to build a small literary house". The hours that Churchill had previously spent on self-instruction were now devoted to writing a book. The young writer worked quickly and finished his first book withir the space of two months. He sent the manuscript to his mother in London, and she found a publisher for the book. Winston Churchill's first book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force. An Episode of the Frontier War*, was published in March 1898. It ran into some 300 pages. The book was a success, and a second edition, painstakingly revised by the author, was printed in 1899.

The book was an undoubted triumph for a twenty-three-year-old officer with a scanty education. Through it Churchill began to make a name for himself in journalism. But he also started to make enemies. The young lieutenant had presumed to criticise the actions of the senior commanders in India and to pass unfavourable comments on Britain's system of national defence. This was not to the liking of either the Command of the British forces in India or military circles in London. Inevitably, this restricted Lieutenant Churchill's further ventures. When, in 1898, he requested permission to take part in another punitive expedition in Northern India, his application was curtly rejected..

After his first book had appeared, Winston "contracted the habit of writing", as he tells us. He spent the winter months in Bangalore writing his second book. He was not involved in any new military expedition, and so there was no factual material for the book. But this did not check the young author: this time he decided to write a novel.

Winston had no intention, either then or later, of becoming a professional novelist or of making a living through writing alone. His plans and intentions were very much broader. But he knew that the famous Disraeli, the

one-time idol of the Conservative Party, had begun as a novelist and had then moved on from literature into politics. What was more, Disraeli's political philosophy, later known as "Tory Democracy", was originally expounded in his literary works. This may have been one of the reasons why Winston decided to venture into the writing of fiction. In any case, as with the books of Disraeli, Winston's first (and last) novel was a vehicle for the writer's personal views on politics and politicians.

Churchill always worked productively and rapidly. While his fellow officers relaxed and amused themselves, he was now writing non-stop. Less than two months had passed before the novel was complete. He called it *Savrola.*

Not without his mother's help, of course, Winston disposed very profitably of his literary endeavour. First of all, he allowed *Macmillan's Magazine* to print the novel in instalments, and then, noting the fairly favourable response from the public, he published it as a self-contained volume of 345 pages. The first edition appeared in 1900. Together with its publication in serial form, it yielded some £700—a level of remuneration that not every established novelist could count on receiving.

Critics agree that the novel's artistic merits are slight. Churchill himself regarded his only work of fiction with some scepticism and made little effort to get it reprinted. Nevertheless it was subsequently reprinted several times, the last time it reappeared being in November 1954 to mark the author's eightieth birthday.

The subject of the novel is unusual. It does, admittedly, contain a love story, which one of Churchill's female relatives is said to have helped him contrive, but this is no more than a side issue. The main theme is a popular revolution in the imaginary country of Laurania, situated somewhere beside the Mediterranean. The people rise up against the reactionary dictatorship, and the regime is toppled. But the people's gains are threatened by a revolution fomented by socialists and communists. The story reaches its climax when the Lauranian capital is bombarded by battleships in an attempt to bring the left-wing forces to heel.

Everyone agrees that *Savrola* is both an autobiographical work and the author's political manifesto. In his vision of Laurania Churchill is undoubtedly depicting many features of the British politics of his time. He ascribes many of his own

traits to Savrola, the book's principal character, who is the noble revolutionary leader of the people of Laurania. Savrola's study is the future study of Winston himself. The selection of books in the study, in which Gibbon and Macaulay have pride of place, reflects the author's tastes and preferences. When Winston writes about Savrola's attitude towards politics, he is presenting his own feelings on the subject.

After describing the scene in which demonstrators are shot down in the square in front of the presidential palace, Winston portrays his hero's reaction to what he witnessed there in the following terms: "His nervous temperament could not fail to be excited by the vivid scenes through which he had lately passed, and the repression of his emotion only heated the inward fire. Was it worth it? The struggle, the labour, the constant rush of affairs, the sacrifice of so many things that make life easy, or pleasant—for what? A people's good! That, he could not disguise from himself, was rather the direction than the cause of his efforts. Ambition was the motive force, and he was powerless to resist it. He could appreciate the delights of an artist, a life devoted to the search for beauty, of sport, the keenest pleasure that leaves no sting behind. To live in dreamy quiet and philosophic calm in some beautiful garden, far from the noise of men and with every diversion that art and intellect could suggest, was, he felt, a more agreeable picture. And yet he knew that he could not endure it. 'Vehement, high, and daring' was his cast of mind. The life he lived was the only one he could ever live; he must go on to the end."

Who is this if not Churchill himself—both the young man of twenty-three, when he wrote *Savrola*, and the elder statesman of half a century later, when he was bringing his political career to a close? In order to satisfy his boundless ambition, Savrola forgoes many of life's pleasures and is prepared to follow the hardest paths to the very end; this is the force that drove Churchill too throughout his life.

Even Winston's most benevolent biographers agree that ambition was his main stimulus. Sir Charles Dilke, the well-known publicist and statesman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, once wrote that Rosebery, who was the British Prime Minister from March 1894 to June 1895, "was the most ambitious man I had ever met". A few years later Sir Charles was to add: "I have since known Winston Churchill."

There is a story that, half a century after writing *Savrola*, Churchill, now the "grand old man" of British politics, once ambled into the House of Commons smoking-room and sat down near a young and newly elected Member. After brooding for a while, Churchill suddenly asked his neighbour: "Young man, I suppose you've wondered sometimes what on earth it was that got me into politics?" The young man answered shyly that he would be most interested to hear. "Ambition, young man! Sheer, naked ambition! ", Churchill replied. Some claim that this is just an anecdote. Significantly, though, it is recounted in biographies produced by writers who were very well disposed towards their subject. This could only have come about because they regarded the story as contributing something towards an understanding of Churchill's personality.

It is the socialists and communists in *Savrola* who are endowed with the worst traits in human nature. This is noteworthy, since it shows that Churchill's profound dislike of socialism and communism had already taken root. It was an attitude that he was to retain right to the very end of the long life.

One part of the story tells of how Britain responded to a note from the Lauranian Government, which was fully conscious of its rights, by sending in a warship called the *Aggressor*. Modern critics are somewhat discomforted by the name given to this British vessel. They slip off the hook by claiming that, at the time when Winston was writing his novel, the term "aggressor" had probably not yet acquired its present unsavoury connotation.

The critics gave the novel a pretty cool reception. An anonymous reviewer in *The Times* commented: "Mr. Winston Spencer Churchill is a good war correspondent, but he is not a novelist.... There is very little character in his creations; they did not interest us. The first half of the book is dull.... Next time he writes a novel he must dispense with the preliminary chapters and begin the fighting at once."

In the view of Churchill's biographers, it is not a great misfortune that he wrote only one novel. But they do regard it as extremely fortunate that the novel was published: if the book did not exist, it would be difficult to understand the inner world of Churchill as a young man.

After finishing the novel, Churchill decided to take part in the war in the Sudan. The British expedition to conquer

the Sudan had been several years in the making. It was preceded by some setbacks for London. After seizing Egypt, Britain managed, in the early 1870s, to gain control of the Sudan too. In 1881, however, the Mahdi of the Sudan led a revolt. Declaring himself to be the emissary of Allah on earth, the Messiah, he headed a national liberation struggle mounted by the Sudanese people against the British. The struggle took on a largely religious colouring. The Sudanese won a number of victories and, at the beginning of 1885, had almost entirely cleared their country of foreign troops, killing the British governor of the Sudan, General Gordon.

This turn of events unleashed a powerful wave of chauvinism in Britain. Politicians and the press demanded revenge for Gordon's death. Responsibility for the bloodshed was, of course, laid at the door of the Mahdi's followers, who had dared to defend their own country against the colonial invaders. After lengthy preparations for the punitive expedition, Britain embarked on a war against the Sudanese state in 1896. As the war drew to a climax, Churchill decided that he had to take part in the decisive engagements. First, however, he had to overcome an obstacle that was substantial, though not entirely unexpected.

Recalling that period, Churchill later wrote: "I now perceived that there were many ill-informed and ill-disposed people who did not take a favourable view of my activities. On the contrary they began to develop an adverse and even a hostile attitude. They began to say things like this: 'Who the devil is this fellow? How has he managed to get to these different campaigns? Why should he write for the papers and serve as an officer at the same time? Why should a subaltern praise or criticize his senior officers? Why should Generals show him favour? How does he get so much leave from his regiment? ' Others proceeded to be actually abusive, and the expressions 'Medal-hunter' and 'Self-advertiser' were used from time to time."

Winston's application for transfer to one of the British regiments in Egypt was categorically rejected. The British army operating in Egypt was led by the able and masterful General Kitchener. The rejection of Churchill's application for transfer to Egypt, which was supported by the War Office, undoubtedly proceeded from none other than the Sirdar (as Kitchener was called in his capacity as Commander of the Egyptian Army). "I became conscious," Churchill

writes, "of the unconcealed disapproval and hostility of the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, Sir Herbert Kitchener." Winston's mother then set to work, making use of all her connections. A further application was made to Kitchener, but the charming Lady Randolph Churchill, too, received a polite, but firm, refusal. After reading Winston's book on the North-West Frontier campaign in India, the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, sent for the young lieutenant. During the conversation, Winston, who never suffered from excessive shyness, requested Salisbury to help him find a place in the army operating against the Sudan. The Prime Minister sent Kitchener a telegram, but he too met with a refusal from the Sirdar. However, this apparently final decision did not deter Lady Churchill. By skilfully playing on the friction existing between Kitchener and the senior officials at the War Office, she managed nevertheless to secure a commission for her son in a regiment that was being sent to join the Sirdar's expeditionary force. Churchill was very apprehensive about Kitchener's reaction to his arrival. But he need not have worried: the Commander just shrugged his shoulders in amazement.

As usual, Winston went off to the Sudan to wield the pen as well as the sword. He had by this time become friendly with Oliver Borthwick, the son of the proprietor of the Conservative *Morning Post*, and arranged through him that the paper would publish a series of articles he would write on the Sudan campaign. The *Morning Post* agreed to pay him £15 a column.

Winston reached the army in the field just in time and took part in the decisive battle, fought in September 1898. By then the Mahdi was already dead, and the Sudanese forces were led by his successor, the Khalifa. The Sudanese Army was large in numbers, but its weaponry and tactics were only at the mediaeval level. It had to fight a British army, supported by Egyptian troops, that was small, but was superbly armed and equipped with the latest military hardware. This clash of the feudal and the modern produced its inevitable result: the battle turned into a slaughter. "We see for ourselves what the Crusaders saw," as Churchill put it. The Sudanese Dervish army was routed in the battle of Omdurman, and the victors crossed the field several times afterwards, finishing off the enemy wounded.

Winston fought in a lancer regiment. He took part in a

rather spectacular attack that was to be the last cavalry charge against infantry in the history of British warfare. Owing to his dislocated shoulder, Churchill went into the attack with a Mauser pistol rather than a sabre. It was probably a good thing that he did, since he was able to shoot several Dervishes and emerge from the battle unscathed.

Omdurman was occupied by Kitchener's army, the war, in effect, came to an end, and Winston sailed off down the Nile to Cairo, where he started work on his next book. There was no need to invent a subject; the British war of conquest in the Sudan provided ample material.

At the same time Winston began to wonder what prospects further military service held for him. Needless to say, he was much tempted by the thought of eventually commanding a large army and winning glory on the battlefield, as his great forebear, the First Duke of Marlborough, had done. But times had changed, and Winston realised that many years of routine military service, spent perhaps in the most remote outposts of the empire, would have to pass before he was promoted to a rank that would put him in command of any sizeable contingent. And even that prospect was highly dubious, since his comments on how the British military establishment conducted campaigns transgressed the normal restraints of subordination and had put him very much out of favour. The generals were clearly in no mood to help the shrewd and daring lieutenant to rise faster than they had themselves. In other words, he had to look round for other avenues of self-advancement—ways that might not be easy, but would certainly be faster. What was more, the material side of army life did not match up to his needs. He could not live on the money he received from the two ladies who maintained him—Queen Victoria in return for his service in the Army, and his mother, who did all she could to help her son. Winston slid slowly but surely into debt.

On the other hand, he found that journalism offered a way of acquiring fame and fortune, and might ultimately bring great popularity too. He received over £300 from the *Morning Post* for the articles he had sent from the Sudan in just a single month. His army pay as a lieutenant over the same period amounted to a mere £12. 10s. 0d. Since Winston's ambitions were coming increasingly to revolve around politics, he began to see journalism as a means of making a political career for himself.

After the Sudan campaign, Churchill resolved to leave the Army and take up writing with the intention of subsequently switching to politics. But before abandoning his life as a soldier, he travelled from England to India to play for his regiment in the Inter-Regimental Polo tournament of 1899. The regiment won, but, although Churchill played well, he was already engrossed in planning his book about the war in the Sudan. On his way back from India, he stopped off in Cairo so as to collect additional material on the war, talked to the most eminent specialists on Sudanese history, and amassed a great deal of information from active participants in the recent events. Back in England, he immersed himself totally in work on the book, which he called *The River War*. The first edition appeared in two volumes in October 1899.

Written by Churchill at the age of 24, the book was a great success. It showed his great interest in history. Besides recounting the events of the campaign in which he took part, Churchill did, in effect, write the history of the British conquest of Egypt and the Sudan. When preparing the book, he evinced a predilection for historical research. He made a thorough job of collecting the various sources and worked meticulously on the structure of the book so as to achieve the greatest possible conciseness, clarity and coherence in his account of the events. The result was a vast, two-volume work that still makes interesting reading today. For the first time, Churchill experienced the great creative satisfaction and even pleasure that he derived from literary work that had a historical dimension, both of which he retained throughout his life.

No love was lost between the generals and the young officer and journalist who gave them such high-handed lectures. Now that Winston had left the Army, he had no need to fear the wrath of the brass hats, and so he gave vent to his feelings in his new book.

The criticism directed against his old enemy, General Kitchener, was devastating. These pages are still valuable in that they reveal some of the true features of British policy at the time and unmask the repugnant face of British colonialism. Churchill was insensed by the outrage that Kitchener perpetrated against the tomb and remains of the Mahdi. As well as being an act of grotesque barbarity, it constituted an affront to the Sudanese people, to whom the Mahdi's tomb was sacred. "By Sir H. Kitchener's orders," Churchill wrote,

"the Tomb has been profaned and razed to the ground. The corpse of the Mahdi was dug up. The head was separated from the body and ... was passed from hand to hand till it reached Cairo Here it remained, an interesting trophy.... The limbs and trunk were flung into the Nile. Such was the chivalry of the conquerors! No man who holds the splendid tradition of the old Liberal Party, no man who is in sympathy with the aspirations of Progressive Toryism, can consistently consent to such behaviour."

Winston did not confine himself to condemnation of Kitchener's acts alone. To a certain extent, he also criticised the whole war against the Sudan. "There are many people in England, and perhaps elsewhere," he wrote, "who seem to be unable to contemplate military operations for clear political objects, unless they can cajole themselves into the belief that their enemy are utterly and hopelessly vile. To this end the Dervishes, from the Mahdi and the Khalifa downwards, have been loaded with every variety of abuse and charged with all conceivable crimes. This may be very comforting to philanthropic persons at home; but when an army in the field becomes imbued with the idea that the enemy are vermin who cumber the earth, instances of barbarity may very easily be the outcome. This unmeasured condemnation is moreover as unjust as it is dangerous and unnecessary.... We are told that the British and Egyptian armies entered Omdurman to free the people from the Khalifa's yoke. Never were rescuers more unwelcome.... It is hypocritical to say that the war was waged to chastise the wickedness of the Dervishes."

These passages naturally aroused the fury of official London. Soon Churchill himself realised that he had overreached himself. Such statements might turn the country's political leaders against him too—a very serious matter, which he did not intend to bring about. A new edition of the book appeared in 1902, this time in a single volume. Churchill removed the passages quoted above and certain others in the same vein. He had to prune away one-third of the book.

In June 1899, after his return to England, Winston visited the Conservative Party's Central Office. It was not his first visit to Conservative headquarters. Some time previously, he had called in to investigate the possibility of becoming a candidate in Parliamentary elections. As the son of Randolph Churchill, he had been given a friendly reception and had been told that it was entirely a question of money. A

candidate had to have enough money to pay for the electoral campaign. If Winston wished to be assigned to a safe constituency, one that would almost certainly speed him on his way to Westminster, then he needed about £1,000 a year. A marginal constituency would cost less, and a hopeless one was quite cheap. Winston did not possess the necessary funds at the time, and so nothing came of the conversation. The only agreement reached was that the prospective candidate should try his hand in the meantime at addressing Conservative Party rallies. He had actually delivered one such speech, and Winston's old friends in the *Morning Post* had given it favourable coverage.

But now, in June 1899, Conservative headquarters suggested that Churchill should stand as the party's candidate in Oldham, where a by-election was to be fought, following the death of the constituency's Conservative MP. The electorate of Oldham, in the heart of industrial Lancashire, consisted mainly of workers employed at the local textile mills. It was a world that was totally alien to Winston. He was unfamiliar with the voters' needs and interests, and was completely at a loss as to how they could be induced to believe that a scion of the Duke of Marlborough was the right man to represent them in Parliament. They were not impressed by his campaign speeches, which contained banal statements to the effect that the British nation was advancing along the path of progress, eulogies of the Empire, and much else in the same vein. His faithfull ally, Lady Randolph Churchill, toured the constituency in an open landau, campaigning ardently on her son's behalf, but fared no better. Churchill's first attempt to enter Parliament failed.

Soon Winston found himself once again with the army in the field, but this time in South Africa. For several years Britain had been trying to annex the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State. Both territories belonged to the Boers—colonists from Holland who had subjugated the local population. Repeated attempts by Britain to turn the two independent republics into colonies had ended in failures that often inflicted great political damage on the country. Finally, in 1899 Her Majesty's Government resolved to achieve its ends by force of arms—a policy particularly advocated by Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary for the Colonies in the Conservative Government.

October 1899 saw the start of the Boer War, a conflict

that was to drag on for almost four years. As soon as the war began, Churchill set off for South Africa, not as an officer on this occasion, but as a war correspondent for the *Morning Post*. By this time, his popularity as a journalist was so great that he had been offered uncommonly favourable terms: he was to receive £250 a month plus expenses. He was free to travel wherever he pleased and to express his personal opinion. No British newspaper had ever paid a war correspondent at such a lavish rate before. Before his departure for South Africa, Churchill was received by Joseph Chamberlain. He left London on the ship that was carrying the British Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Redvers Buller, and his staff to the Cape. Both Churchill and the officers on board were haunted by the one fear that the war might be over before they arrived. Upon disembarking at Cape Town, however, they found that they need not have worried. The British were suffering defeat after defeat, and it was clear that the war would be a protracted affair.

Churchill was no lover of peace and quiet; if adventure did not come of its own accord, he would go out looking for it. Which is what happened on this occasion. Soon after reaching the front, he took part in a reconnaissance mission that one of the units was carrying out in an armoured train. The train penetrated into Boer-held territory, came under fire, and several of its trucks were derailed, blocking the line for the engine and the remaining trucks. Although he was a civilian, Churchill took resolute steps to free the engine and the trucks that were intact, rescue the wounded and lead the men to safety. While Churchill's old friend Captain J. Aylmer Haldane, who was in charge of the infantrymen, put up covering fire, Winston organised the operation to unblock the line, and the engine began to head back to base. The withdrawal, however, was not entirely successful: Haldane, half his troops and later Churchill too, were captured.

Winston was now in an extremely perilous situation. Although a civilian, he had taken part in the battle, and the Boers had seen this. Consequently, in accordance with the rules of warfare, he ought soon to face a court-martial and might be shot a few minutes later to a roll of drums. This seemed to be the likely outcome when Churchill was ordered to stand apart from the group of British prisoners after they had been taken to Boer headquarters. He demanded to be released on the grounds that he was a correspondent. But

both the Boers and Churchill himself were well aware that his participation in the battle made all his arguments futile. Shortly afterwards, however, Churchill was allowed to rejoin the other prisoners, and he heaved a sigh of relief. A Boer field-cornet remarked: "We are not going to let you go, old chappie, although you are a correspondent. We don't catch the son of a lord every day." It could also be said that the Boers had no wish to stir up British anger by executing the scion of an aristocratic family, and to induce the enemy to seek revenge.

The prisoners were taken to Pretoria, where they were quartered in a school building. Churchill's persistent demands to be released as a war correspondent met with no success, and so he started to plan his escape together with Haldane and another officer.

One night, when the sentry's back was turned Winston scrambled over the school wall. His two companions were unable to follow him. He found himself alone and unarmed in an enemy town at night, a long way from the front. He decided to head for the railway line so as to cross the Boer-held territory on a train and so reach the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. No one stopped him in the streets of Pretoria. Having reached the railway, Churchill clambered on to a slowly moving goods train and hid beneath empty coal sacks. He jumped off the train at dawn, fearing that he would be spotted during the day when the sacks were being unloaded.

His caution was well founded. The Boers undertook a vigorous search for the escaped prisoner. They put a price of £25 on his head—not a terribly large sum even in those days. On the following evening, Winston was unable to board any passing trains and continue his journey as planned. When night fell, hungry, weak and dispirited, he headed towards the light he could see in a house, almost certainly running the risk of being captured by the Boers or being handed over to them. Luck was with him once again. It so happened that he knocked on the door of the only house for miles around that belonged to an Englishman. He had been left by the Boers so that he could maintain some collieries that had been brought to a standstill by the war. Together with his friends, the Englishman hid Winston in a mine and, a few days later, when the search died down, concealed him in the freight van of a train going to the Portuguese colony. Winston reached the

port of Lourenço Marques on 19 December 1899.

Quite unexpectedly, Winston Churchill's adventures in South Africa brought him immense political benefit. Having regained his freedom, he immediately sent the *Morning Post* a detailed account of his escape from the prison camp, omitting to mention only the Englishman who had hidden him, so as not to put him in any danger. The account read like an adventure story and attracted the public's attention.

When Churchill left Lourenço Marques and arrived in Durban, South Africa, the British commanders gave him a hero's welcome. "I was received," Winston wrote, "as if I had won a great victory." The crowd almost tore him to pieces in their delight. "Young ladies sent me woolen comforters," he later recalled. "Old ladies forwarded their photographs."

It is not difficult to appreciate why so much was made of Churchill's exploit. During the week in which he had been a fugitive, the British army in South Africa had suffered a new series of major reverses. The British were sustaining casualties the like of which had not been since the Crimean War. For the British Army, that week went down in the history of the Boer War as the "Black Week". Winston's daring and successful escape was the only bright spot in the general gloom.

In order to divert attention from the defeats at the front, the British press seized on Churchill's adventures. Winston himself was later to acknowledge that the papers gave the whole affair sensational treatment and inflated the episode unduly, even inventing colourful details.

Churchill was not slow to derive benefit from his changed position. Generals who had previously ignored him now willingly granted him an audience. When Buller received him, Churchill asked to be reinstated in the army in South Africa. This was a difficult request to grant. After Churchill had lectured the generals in his despatches from India, and then from the Sudan, the War Office had forbidden serving officers to write for newspapers. However, Buller was able to find a compromise solution, circumventing the regulations, by giving Churchill a commission in one of the irregular forces that were being raised at the time.

Following the British defeat at the hands of the Boers, Buller was soon replaced as Commander-in-Chief by Lord Roberts. The reports that appeared in the *Morning Post* contained fairly venomous criticism of Roberts and other

British generals in South Africa, which did nothing to endear Churchill to military circles.

Winston was in a number of battles in South Africa, and he had the good luck to emerge unscathed. His brother John was wounded in the first battle. Winston's cousin, the ninth Duke of Marlborough, also played a part in the war as one of Roberts's staff officers. Winston's mother, together with the Duchess of Marlborough and several other high-society ladies, chartered the American hospital ship *Maine* and sailed on it to Durban to take care of the wounded.

Some of Winston's biographers hint that Jennie Churchill's appearance in South Africa was prompted by more than the traditional charitable and philanthropic motives. By that time she had formed an attachment to a young officer, Lord Cornwallis-West, whom she was soon to marry. Winston returned to London from South Africa in the summer of 1900 and was just in time for his mother's wedding.

Needless to say, as soon as he was back from the front, Winston set about writing a new book, the basis for which was provided, as in previous instances, by the reports he had sent the *Morning Post* from the theatre of military operations. Even then a characteristic feature of Churchill's literary style had already become apparent: whenever he wrote, he wrote at length. The original version of *The River War* had filled two volumes. His description of the Boer War, in which a very large part is taken up by an account of the author's own exploits, also ran into two volumes. Both volumes were published in 1900. Churchill was able to congratulate himself on a further success. He had published six volumes in under three years.

South Africa enabled Churchill not only to write two books, but also to enter Parliament. Lord Salisbury, the Conservative Prime Minister, dissolved Parliament in 1900 and declared a general election. The Conservatives realised that the victories over the Boers, won at great cost by the British fighting-man, did not yet mean the end of the war. Only the politically inept or uninitiated could hope that the British occupation of the capitals of both Boer republics would bring hostilities to a close. The Boers were very stubborn opponents, and there was the danger that they would continue the struggle, using guerrilla tactics, which is what actually happened.

Foreseeing this possibility, the Conservatives took

advantage of the wave of chauvinism that surged over Britain during the Boer War. They decided that the time was ripe to call Parliamentary elections and so renew their tenure of office. They fought the campaign on the issue of bringing the war in South Africa to a victorious conclusion. Their Liberal opponents were in a weak position, since the party was split over the war issue. There was a group of imperialist-minded Liberals, a group of pro-Boer radicals, and a further group holding the middle ground. Chamberlain campaigned under the slogan: "Every seat lost to the Government is a seat gained to the Boers." However, the masses did not share the Conservatives' chauvinism, and they ended up with rather fewer seats in Parliament than they had previously held; nevertheless, they retained their Commons majority.

Naturally, Churchill was a Conservative candidate in the elections. Once again he campaigned in Oldham.

His relatives rallied to the cause. The Duke of Marlborough visited the Conservative Party organisation in Oldham and promised £ 400 towards Churchill's campaign expenses and a further £ 100 a year to maintain the party organisation. Winston was now a war hero. The Conservatives made the fullest possible use of the publicity given to his escape. Poems and songs were written about him, and music halls resounded with his praise. "Great Joe" Chamberlain himself appeared in Oldham to lend his support. Despite all this, Churchill only just scraped through by a margin of 130 votes. But that was unimportant; the main thing was that he was now a Member of Parliament.

The Conservatives exploited Winston's popularity as much as possibile for the benefit of the party. The "hero of the Boer War" spoke time after time in the various constituencies on behalf of other Conservative candidates. Arthur Balfour invited Winston to support him at a campaign meeting in Manchester. This gave Winston a varied audience and an extra opportunity to increase his own popularity.

Seeing that his audiences always gave him a favourable hearing, Churchill decided to augment his monetary resources somewhat by delivering paid lectures in different towns. A politician needs money. No salary was paid to MPs at the time. They were expected to have private sources of income sufficient to maintain themselves and to meet their electoral outlays. Salaries for MPs only came into being in 1911.

By the time Churchill was elected to the House of

Commons, his journalistic and publicistic undertakings had earned him more than £4,000. That was a lot of money for a man of 26. The purchasing power of the pound was then many times higher than it is today, and taxation was so minimal that it could be ignored. But Winston regarded this amount as being insufficient if he was to be a full-time politician and to lead the sort of life that was normal for Britain's rulers at that time.

After the elections he embarked on a lecture tour, speaking on the Boer War. The talks naturally revolved around his own graphically described adventures in South Africa. The tour brought political grist to the Conservative mill. Churchill was, in effect, diffusing the same propaganda as during the electoral campaign, and so he enjoyed the backing of influential people. Without this support, he could not have "banked safely over £4,500", as he tells us, in a single month. However, the lectures gained Churchill popularity as well as money. They were good publicity for the political novice, and the importance of such publicity had already been convincingly demonstrated by Churchill's own struggle for a seat in Parliament.

The success of his lecture tour in Britain prompted Churchill to consider a similar tour in the USA and Canada. Earning dollars was a more difficult matter, however, Churchill's American agent did not pull his punches. He advertised Winston as the hero of five wars, the author of six books and the future Prime Minister of England. Even the ambitious Winston thought this was going a little far, although he secretly hoped that one day the post might indeed be his. In the meantime, though, such publicity might make a dubious impression in Britain, and he asked the agent to moderate his ardour.

Winston's meetings in the USA were complicated by the fact that Irish Americans never let slip any opportunity of embarrassing the speaker and drawing the parallel between British policy in South Africa and Britain's colonial policy in Ireland. Even so, Churchill's hair-raising accounts of his escape from the Boers earned him a sizeable material reward in America.

After returning from America and Canada, Winston continued to give lectures in Britain until mid-February 1901. By then, he had amassed nearly £10,000. He invested the money through the banker Sir Ernest Cassel, whose

services his father had used in the past. He decided that the income from this amount ought to be sufficient to enable him to devote himself wholeheartedly to politics.

While on his lecture tour of the United States, Churchill had heard the news of the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901. She had reigned for 64 years. These years had formed the Golden Age of capitalist Britain. Her successor, Edward VII, ascended the throne at the critical moment when capitalism in Britain reached the imperialist stage of its development. Britain still remained one of the richest and most economically and politically powerful countries. But it was already clear that the heyday of bourgeois Britain was over, that the Golden Age of British capitalism had come to an end, and that the future was gloomy, uncertain, and sure to be dominated by a hard struggle against the country's rapidly growing imperialist competitors. The political situation inside Britain was also changing, the balance of class forces was being transformed, the part played by the working class was growing fast, and the role of the masses in general was on the increase. The influence of the aristocracy was declining in the highest spheres of British society, and the importance of the bourgeoisie rose accordingly. These changes were affecting the balance of forces in Parliament and the Government. Such were the conditions in which Churchill began his political career.

Chapter 3

Winston Changes His Party

On his way back from the war in the Sudan in 1898, Churchill had met the brilliant journalist G.W. Steevens, a *Daily Mail* correspondent, on board the ship. Steevens was greatly impressed with Churchill and later told the owner of the newspaper, R. Leicester Harmsworth, about him. Harmsworth suggested he should write a proper description of Churchill, and Steevens willingly obliged. The result was a *Daily Mail* article entitled "The Youngest Man in Europe," which contained a penetrating analysis of Winston's personality as it was then.

"In years," Steevens wrote, "he is a boy; in temperament he is also a boy; but in intention, in deliberate plan, purpose, adaptation of means to ends he is already a man. In any other generation but this he would be a child. Anyone other than he, being a junior subaltern of Hussars, would be a boisterous, simple, full-hearted, empty-headed boy. But Churchill is a man, with ambitions fixed, with the steps towards their attainment clearly defined with a precocious, almost uncanny judgment as to the efficacy of the means to the end."

Steevens went on to say: "Winston Spencer Churchill can hardly have seen much of Government and Parliament and forensic politics at twenty-four, but he moves in and out among their deviations with the ease, if not with the knowledge, of a veteran statesman.... He may and he may not possess the qualities which make a great general.... In any

case, they will never be developed, for, if they exist, they are overshadowed by qualities which might make him, almost at will, a great popular leader, a great journalist, or the founder of a great advertising business.... Winston Churchill is, outwardly, not modest," Steevens continued. "In the Army especially ... his assurance has earned him many snubs.... But Winston Churchill cannot be snubbed. His self-confidence bobs up irresistibly, though seniority and common sense and facts themselves conspire to force it down.... He is ambitious and he is calculating.... It is not so much that he calculates how he is to make his career a success—how, frankly, he is to boom—but that he has a queer, a shrewd power of introspection, which tells him his gifts and character are such as will make him boom. He has not studied to make himself a demagogue. He was born a demagogue, and he happens to know it.... At present he calls himself a Tory Democrat. Tory—the opinions—might change; democrat—the methods—never. For he has the twentieth century in his marrow."

Steevens painted a generally true portrait of Churchill as he was a couple of years before entering Parliament. Churchill's subsequent actions confirmed the accuracy of the journalist's appraisal. It can be safely said that the features Steevens detected in the young Churchill were largely retained right up to the end of his political career. Naturally, circumstances, time, events and experience caused these features to alter slightly, but fundamentally they persisted unchanged.

What, then, were the convictions held by this ambitious young man who was so vigorously embarking on his political career at the turn of the century? Neither at the start of his career nor at the end of it did Churchill have any clearly formulated and considered system of views or an unwavering general outlook. "Had Churchill been asked what 'things in the world' he wanted 'to see done', he would have been hard put to name them," comments his biographer Peter De Mendelssohn. "In short, he possessed no such thing as a *Weltanschauung*. He had no considered views; but he had opinions. He had no coherent philosophy; but he had ideas. However, he was filled with ambition and energy, an urge for action, an impatient determination to advance from the periphery to the centre of things."

With these reservations, Churchill's convictions may be referred to the pragmatists' system of views, although

Churchill himself would probably not have thought that his views approximated to any philosophical scheme of things.

Churchill was not particularly religious. He had a certain respect for the Church as one of the ancient state institutions that benefited his class. "I therefore," Churchill wrote, "adopted quite early in life a system of believing whatever I wanted to believe, while at the same time leaving reason to pursue unfettered whatever paths she was capable of treading."

We shall not attempt to reconstruct Churchill's system of philosophical views on life in the broad sense of the term, since this would be a futile undertaking. Churchill was ill-equipped to work out such a system of views. His education was extremely superficial, spasmodic and disjointed. He had hardly any grasp of economic and financial matters. For him, social problems were a mystery enclosed beneath seven seals, and he never felt any urge to unravel it.

Throughout his life, Churchill clung to the view that history is made by outstanding individuals, by heroes. This supposition underlay his politics and his many books. He saw himself as destined to play just such an outstanding part, and this belief permeates his first steps in Parliament. He was firmly convinced that it was his vocation to rule the people of Britain. Another very capable careerist and demagogue was already active in Parliament at the time—David Lloyd George. One of Churchill's biographers writes: "If anyone at this period had asked the two men why they had entered Parliament, both might have answered: 'In order to become Ministers.' And why Ministers? Again, both would surely have replied: 'In order to become Prime Minister.' And why Prime Minister? ... Churchill would have answered: 'In order to *be* Prime Minister.' "

But in 1901 this prospect was still a very remote one. Churchill had yet to make his first official move in Parliament—to deliver his maiden speech—and so undergo a new MP's baptism of fire. As a young man, he was very talkative at the table whenever he was invited out, and entertained his hosts and guests alike. Fashionable table talk, however, is one thing, but one's first speech in Parliament is quite another. It creates the first impression of an apprentice politician. Structure, diction and, above all, content are important.

Churchill, especially in his mature years, was a good speaker. Admittedly, his speeches were often strong not so

much in depth of thought and logic as in the emotional impact they made on his listeners and in the monumental grandeur of the style in which they were couched. Churchill realised that oratory was essential to a successful political career. He expended immense effort on distinguishing himself in this sphere. It was particularly necessary to overcome the speech defect which Churchill never did wholly eliminate: he could not pronounce the sound "s" without lisping. Consequently, he had to pay strict and constant attention to his enunciation, devising procedures to conceal the innate defect as much as possible. He also had to learn how to deliver impromptu speeches and engage in polemics on the spur of the moment. Naturally, the main Parliamentary speeches are always prepared beforehand, but a speaker is often interrupted by questions and repartee. A skilful Parliamentarian needs to react quickly and be able to parry, instantly and effectively, all attempts to sidetrack or embarrass him.

Churchill was hard put to achieve this art in the early years. He meticulously prepared a script for his speeches. Since the future course of a debate was uncertain, he often had to draft several versions so as to be prepared for contingencies that might arise. He dispayed great zeal and industriousness in preparing his Parliamentary speeches. Throughout his political life, even when he became Prime Minister and had a vast staff of official aides at his disposal, Churchill always wrote his own speeches. He did this, moreover, with great care, interest and pleasure. Since it is considered bad form and the sign of a feeble mind to read from a script in the House of Commons, Churchill had to learn his speeches by heart, often in several versions. He had a fine memory, but it was hard work all the same. He was frequently haunted by the fear of confusing one version with another in mid-flow. It is said that, towards the end of his political career, Churchill stopped learning his speeches by heart and mastered the skills of impromptu speaking and counter-attacking on unexpected issues. It is entirely beyond dispute, however, that he wrote all his major speeches beforehand and worked painstakingly on their form and content. J.B. Atkins, a good friend of Churchill's, says: "He gave himself to work. When he was not busy with politics he was reading or writing. He did not lead the life of other young men in London. He may have visited political clubs, but I never saw him in an ordinary social club."

Members of Parliament still remembered Randolph Churchill and so eagerly awaited the first appearance in the House of his son. One of them later recalled how five minutes had hardly passed since Churchill's appearance in the House when everyone noticed that he was sprawled in his seat, with top hat pushed forward over his forehead, his legs outstretched and crossed, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and was gazing around as though he were the oldest MP present, rather than the very youngest.

There is a Parliamentary tradition that new Members do not speak immediately, but at least a month after entering the House. This tradition did not suit Churchill. He was in no mood to mark time, and so delivered his maiden speech just four days after crossing the threshold.

Churchill's first Commons address was quite successful. He received applause from both sides of the House—from both Conservatives and Liberals. But the Conservative leaders were frowning. The speech made by the young Conservative Member ran counter to the official party line. The Conservatives wished to bring the war against the Boers to a successful conclusion and to mete out harsh treatment to them. Churchill, on the other hand, who had made the Boer War the subject of his maiden speech—a sensible choice, since few had a better idea than he of what was then happening in South Africa—favoured relatively mild treatment of the vanquished side. He even showed a liking for the Boers. "No people," he said, "has received so much verbal sympathy and so little practical support as the Boers. If I were a Boer fighting in the field—and if I were a Boer, I hope I should be fighting in the field—I should not allow myself to be taken in by any meassage of sympathy! "

After listening to Churchill's speech, Joseph Chamberlain muttered: "That's the way to lose seats! " "Great Joe" meant the seat occupied by Winston for the Conservatives was as good as lost.

Winston's attack, in his very first speech, on the policy of his own party was not just the boldness of a young MP. It was an open challenge, if a carefully calculated one. Winston was declaring, in effect, that he intended to follow in his father's footsteps. Randolph's tactics, it will be recalled, had been to snipe at the leaders of his own party so as to compel them to buy him off with a major post in the party leadership and the government.

Those who are none too familiar with Britain's Parliamentary traditions and political *mores* may find it surprising that both Randolph and Winston Churchill became prominent in the House of Commons so quickly. Unquestionably, they were both able men and were endowed with great energy, Winston especially. Needless to say, the British Parliament also possessed other Members with considerable statesmanlike capabilities. But it would be quite wrong to assume that all MPs, or even most of them, were people of this calibre. If that had been the case, Randolph and Winston might not have achieved anything, despite their talents. Lord Milner, a major Conservative politician, wrote of Parliament at the beginning of the 20th century that "this rotten assembly in Westminster and the whole future of the Empire may turn upon the whims of men who have been elected for their competence in dealing with Metropolitan tramways or country pubs". There may be an element of polemical exaggeration here, but Alfred Milner is credited with a good knowledge of Parliament.

Not only did Winston adopt his father's Parliamentary tactics; he also borrowed many of his slogans too. He attacked the leaders of his own party from "left-wing" positions. He was, of course, no leftist. Steevens once rightly supposed that, while holding reactionary views, Winston would seek to achieve his ends through "democratic methods", i.e. he would pose as the champion of the masses. Churchill's first Commons speech on the Boer War was fashioned in keeping with that principle.

Winston was soon to attack, from the same standpoint, a Government proposal to reorganise the standing army. Drawing on the Boer War experience, William Brodrick, the Secretary of State for War, tabled a Government bill to set up six army corps, three of which would be kept permanently on standby, so that they could be despatched from Britain at any time. "We have by accident become a military nation," the Minister declared, "and we must endeavour henceforth to remain one."

This was not a naive proposal. The activation of the national liberation struggle in the British Empire, and the growing antagonism between Britain and Germany spoke in its favour. A major war was clearly in the offing. In its foreign policy, the Conservative Government made an unsuccessful attempt to reach an understanding with Germany,

perceived that country's growing hostility and reluctance to negotiate, and so embarked on a vigorous policy of forming alliances directed against Germany. In the circumstances, it was perfectly logical to enlarge and reorganise the British Army so as to face up to the changing international situation. Churchill led an attack against Brodrick's proposal. He later recalled that he spent six weeks preparing his speech on the issue and learnt it by heart so well that he could recite it starting from any section and in any order.

Churchill needed figures if he was to challenge Brodrick in the manner he was contemplating. He always hated figures and everything connected with them (except, of course, for his personal income). He was therefore incapable of handling the figures relating to army expenditure himself. For this purpose, he enlisted the services of Sir Francis Mowatt, who kept him supplied, then as well as later, with relevant statistical data, factual material and arguments. Churchill's first few months in Parliament thus brought to light a characteristic feature of his activities as a politician and statesman.

Throughout his life he made wide use of expert assistance when preparing his public addresses and working on his books.

The young MP came out categorically against the increased expenditure on the Army that Brodrick's plan entailed. He hinted that the money thus saved should be used to improve the situation of ordinary people. Noting that Brodrick called for army expenditure to be doubled, Churchill exclaimed: "Was there no poverty at home? " He made reference to the fact that his father had also opposed any increase in military expenditure.

Winston was pursuing a number of aims through his campaign against army reform. He needed to show the Government that he was a figure to be reckoned with. He was seeking to gain prestige among the masses by championing popular interests so as to increase his standing in the eyes of the party leaders. Finally, his attack on Brodrick was a form of revenge against the Conservatives for throwing his father overboard so high-handedly from the political ship. The Conservative MP Arthur Lee sparply censured Churchill: "It is not well to confuse filial piety with public duty. This is not the time to parade or pursue family traditions."

Winston Churchill's opposition to army reform was profoundly contradictory. Even then Churchill was a rampant

imperialist. He regarded it as Britain's duty to subjugate and enslave other peoples, and to expand and strengthen the colonial empire. It was to serve this purpose that he had taken part in military operations on India's North-West Frontier, in the Sudan and in South Africa. The Government proposal to form a more powerful army was also prompted by imperialist considerations. Consequently, Churchill's opposition to the proposal was completely devoid of logic—if, that is, one discounts the special logic of self-advancement. Brodrick's reply was extremely apt: "He came down to the House to preach Imperialism without being able to bear the burden of Imperialism, and when the hereditary qualities he possesses of eloquence and courage may be tempered also by discarding the hereditary desire to run Imperialism on the cheap." Winston could find no coherent rejoinder.

The army reform bill was discussed for two years both inside and outside Parliament. Churchill campaigned tirelessly, and eventually published his speeches on the issue in the form of a small booklet. The Government proposal foundered, though not just because of Churchill, of course. The outcome was also affected by the fact that bourgeois opinion in Britain had not yet come round to the view that the country might need a powerful army in just 10-12 years' time. People believed implicitly that the Royal Navy alone could defend British interests. Churchill lent his wordy support to the idea. The future would show that he was very much mistaken, although he is considered to have been an authority on all matters connected with the Navy. In both the First and the Second World War, the Navy alone proved to be totally inadequate to Britain's military needs, and the British Government had to build up vast armies when hostilities had already started.

Winston's speeches against reform of the Army showed once more that he had adopted the political tactics and strategy of his father. Circumstances prevented him from creating his own party inside the Conservative Party, as Randolph had done. Nevertheless, Winston was able to muster a group of kindred spirits—ambitious young men like himself. A prominent member of the group was Lord Hugh Cecil, the Prime Minister's youngest son. Consequently, the group came to be known as "The Hughligans". The name was soon modified, and in his autobiography Churchill himself

refers to the group as "The Hooligans". They strove doggedly to live up to the name.

Churchill's group would often organise meetings with prominent members of different parties, at which political matters were discussed. In April 1902 the "Hooligans" invited Joseph Chamberlain to dinner. "Great Joe" accepted the invitation, though he remarked to his hosts: "I am dining in very bad company." His parting words were: "You young gentlemen have entertained me royally, and in return I will leave you a priceless secret. Tariffs! There are the politics of the future, and of the near future. Study them closely and make yourselves masters of them, and you will not regret your hospitality to me! "

On 15 May 1903 Chamberlain delivered in his Birmingham constituency a speech that had immense repercussions in British politics. At that time, Britain favoured Free Trade, i.e. the principle of no state interference in the economy and in the free play of economic forces. The principle was endorsed by both Conservatives and Liberals. As long as Britain enjoyed a monopoly in the world economy, the Free Trade principle was in tune with the times, accorded well with the existing conditions and provided British capitalists with large profits. But once Britain had lost its monopoly position in world markets and in industry, and when competition with its imperialist rivals became very much fiercer, Free Trade was no longer in keeping with the new conditions in the world. Chamberlain and many others had realised this.

Britain's competitors, particularly Germany and the USA, surrounded their home market and industry with a powerful wall of protective tariffs. Chamberlain proposed that, accordingly, a customs union should be formed, consisting of Great Britain and her possessions. The countries within the British Empire were to be protected by tariffs against the entry of goods from third countries, while goods produced within the Empire would enjoy tariff concessions, known as preferences Chamberlain claimed that this system would enable the British economy to attain a new and unprecedented level of prosperity.

The adoption of this proposal would radically alter the country's economic policy. Some sectors of industry, particularly heavy industry, with which Joseph Chamberlain had connections, would benefit immediately from tariffs. But

light industry and shipbuilding would gain nothing from their introduction. Commercial quarters also lacked conviction in the value of tariffs as far as they were concerned. The introduction of preferential tariffs would also entail a rise in the price of imported food. This meant that working people's standard of living would fall, and so they had no wish to see Free Trade rejected. The country was not yet ready to adopt Chamberlain's policy. It was to take nearly three decades for the domestic struggle over tariffs to result eventually in Britain's rejection of Free Trade and conversion to Protectionism.

Joseph Chamberlain's speech wrought an instant transformation in British politics. From then on, the tariff issue was to be the subject of heated debate in both Parliament and press for years. The Liberals, who had split over the Boer War, closed their ranks immediately once their political creed was jeopardised. The Conservative Party and the Government split into supporters and opponents of tariffs. At first, the split was not very noticeable, but, as time passed,it became more and more glaring. Joseph Chamberlain would press for tariffs, while the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, upheld the principle of Free Trade. Both had their own fervent supporters.

Churchill appraised the situation correctly. The country was not yet ready to adopt Protectionism, and the idea had many opponents. Therefore, by opposing it he could cause great embarrassment to the Government, some of whose members wished to introduce Protections. He could thus gain support from the opponents of tariffs.

Churchill launched his attack just a week after Chamberlain's Birmingham speech. His arguments were the arguments used by the Liberal Party in support of Free Trade. As was often the case with Churchill, his speeches left many loose ends. Referring to the British people, he talked of "that system of Free Trade and cheap food ... under which they have advanced from the depth of poverty and distress to the first position among the nations of the world". Churchill was pretending he did not know of a recent survey of the living conditions of working people in different parts of Britain. Carried out by Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, the survey proved irrefutably that a third of the population was on the verge of starvation. It is highly likely that he really did have no conception of this owing to his indifference and even

antipathy towards social problems. This did not inhibit Churchill from claiming, with scarcely credible self-assurance, that the living conditions of the British people were splendid. In virtually the same breath, and seemingly oblivious of the contradiction, he spoke of the need for social reform: "The policy which the Unionist [i.e. Conservative] Party should pursue must be a policy of Imperialism, but not of one-sided Imperialism .... Lord Beaconsfield ... did not neglect the great questions of social reform, and first and foremost in his mind he set the virtue and the prosperity of the English people. It will be by following as closely as we may the example of his Statecraft, that we shall best serve the interests of the Party and of the State." Churchill linked the question of tariffs with the problem of "Tory Democracy" so as to further embarrass the Government.

The Government's position was, in any case, extremely difficult. Threatening to resign, Chamberlain demanded that Balfour should officially endorse Protectionism. The Free Traders in the Government applied pressure from the other side. On 9 September 1903 both Chamberlain and the Free Trade ministers tendered their resignations. Balfour set about forming a new cabinet. Winston's crucial moment was at hand.

Many had tried before Winston Churchill to advance their career by regularly criticising their own party leadership. The method is still employed, with variable success, today by Conservative, Liberal and Labour MPs. If the recalcitrant MP is a major political figure, capable of inflicting serious damage on the Government and party by his attacks, by staying in the party or by defecting to one of the other parties, the Prime Minister and party leader generally resorts to a well-tested method for silencing the troublemaker: he is given a post in the Government. In order to hang on to the post, the former sniper instantly rallies to the Government's defence and subscribes to the principle of collective responsibility for the Government's actions. Randolph Churchill had achieved a measure of success by this means, when Salisbury attempted to buy him off with the Government post second only to that of Prime Minister. His son was now pursuing the same tactics.

If he had been offered a ministerial post in the new Government, Winston would probably have leapt at the opportunity, just as his father had snapped up Salisbury's

similar proposal. But Balfour refused to provide Winston with this chance and passed him over. This was, of course, not just an oversight. His scorn for Churchill was emphasised by his offer of a Government post to Andrew Bonar Law, a new Conservative politician who was just as young as Winston, but noticeably less colourful and energetic.

After Balfour had failed to include Churchill in the Government, thereby stressing his refusal to make any concessions, Winston decided to leave the Conservative Party and join the Liberals. In all fairness, it should be pointed out that such defections are a fairly frequent occurrence in British politics. Whenever the transfer from one party to another results from a change in the member's views, it can hardly be censured. In this particular case, however, nothing of the kind occurred, no matter how much Churchill sought to prove the opposite or his biographers to aid and abet him. He had been an imperialist Conservative in the Tory Party, and that was what he remained even when joining the Liberals.

Joseph Chamberlain considered that Balfour had made a mistake in not pacifying Winston Churchill by the traditional method. "Winston is the cleverest of all the young men," he once commented, "and the mistake Arthur made was letting him go." This remark is a convincing indication that Joseph Chamberlain did not for a moment doubt that Churchill's defection was due to simple careerism, rather than to any consideration of principle.

There are grounds for supposing that Churchill realised as soon as he reached Parliament that he might well eventually cross the floor of the House. The situation at the top end of the Conservative Party at the time was such that Churchill could not expect to rise rapidly if he remained a Tory. And he was an extremely impatient man. In the autumn of 1901, while relaxing on an estate in Scotland, Churchill met the well-known colonial figure Cecil Rhodes. Churchill frankly discussed with him his position in the Conservative Party. The Countess of Warwick later recorded in her memoirs: "He wanted power, and the Tory road to power for a young man was blocked by the Cecils and other brilliant young Conservatives, whereas the Liberal path was open. Cecil Rhodes was all in favour of Winston turning Liberal." This is the true reason for Churchill's change of political front and for his "conversion."

Churchill's departure from the Conservatives passed through several stages. In December 1903 he attacked Conservative policy, as usual, and on one occasion ended his speech with the words: "Thank God we have a Liberal Party! " In March 1904 he began to call himself an "independent Conservative". His speeches became increasingly "left-wing" and demagogic. In April 1904 Churchill officially severed his links with the Conservative Party. After this, half a dozen constituencies suggested that he should come to them and stand in the next Parliamentary elections as a Free Trade candidate. But Churchill was not tempted.

As one of his biographers comments, "it might be the path for principles and strong views, but it was not the way to promotion, office, and authority. It was plain that he needed the machinery of a great party behind him if he was to get anywhere with anv rapidity.... He must go the full length and join the Liberal Party."

Parliament understood why Churchill had joined the Liberals. His action seemed particularly reprehensible because the Conservative Party was passing through a period of confusion at the time and seemed to many to be a sinking ship. It is probably for that reason that he came to be known as "the Blenheim Rat". According to his biographers, this was a comparatively mild specimen of the various insulting epithets that were then heaped upon him.

Churchill admitted to Sir Charles Dilke that he did not agree with certain aspects of Liberal policy. Since this confession was made immediately after Churchill's defection to the Liberal camp, Dilke issued a stern warning: "You had better watch out, Winston. The rat may leave the sinking ship once, but not twice. The second time you're done for." But Dilke was wrong. Twenty years later, Churchill managed to accomplish the impossible: once again, he abandoned a sinking ship (this time the Liberal one) and surfaced, more or less successfully, among the Conservatives.

Having broken with the Conservatives, Churchill proceeded to explain his new political programme. He attacked in two directions. Firstly, he did all he could to denigrate the Conservative Party, seeking to prove that it stood against the interests of the people. In a speech delivered in Manchester on 16 May 1904, Churchill referred to the Conservative Party as a powerful federation acting in the interests of Big Capital. Conservative rule meant "corruption at home, aggression to

cover it up abroad", and the tyranny of the party machine. Conservative policy was "dear food for the million, cheap labour for the millionaire". Churchill naturally had a first-hand knowledge of the Conservative Party and said a great deal that was true in the course of his broadsides.

Secondly, Churchill spoke vaguely of the need for major social reforms and improvements in the people's standard of living: "We have got to make this clear in regard to great and urgent social questions: that, wherever private privilege comes into collision with the public interest, the public interest must have the right of way.... Our movements are towards a better, fairer organization of society ... [and] the time will surely come—and will come the sooner for our efforts—when the dull grey clouds under which millions of our fellow-countrymen are monotonously toiling will break and melt and vanish for ever in the sunshine of a new and nobler age."

Shortly after making this speech, he crossed the floor of the House to the Liberal benches and sat next to Lloyd George. They were subsequently to become great friends; at least, that is what Churchill tells us. In 1904 he referred to Lloyd George as "the best fighting general in the Liberal army". This was a period in which the Liberals possessed a group of outstanding politicians—men like Asquith, Morley, Grey, Haldane and several others. There was therefore no great need for them to attract able politicians from outside. Some of them were very sceptical about Churchill's transfer of allegiance. Still, he had a thick skin and joined Lloyd George in lashing the Conservative Government. Both men behaved in such a way that no one was in any doubt as to their motives: they were laying claim to ministerial posts in the very near future.

They were given these posts shortly afterwards. The Conservative Government was paralysed by the internal struggle over foreign trade policy. Chamberlain delivered an ultimatum to Balfour, challenging him to dissolve Parliament and declare a general election so that the electorate's attitude towards the introduction of a Protectionist policy could be determined. The decision would brook no further delay, and Balfour concluded that a piece of deft manoeuvring was called for. On 4 December 1905 he tendered his resignation. The idea, essentially, was that the Liberals would now form a government lacking a Parliamentary majority. This govern-

ment would be a short-lived one—an idea that was supported by the absence of unity among the Liberals. However, Balfour miscalculated. He had exaggerated the divergences within the Liberal leadership. On 5 December 1905 the Liberal leader, Henry Campbell-Bannerman formed a government and immediately dissolved Parliament, stating that elections would be held in January 1906. Balfour's resignation brought to an end a decade of Conservative rule. Liberal governments were to be in power for the next ten years, and Britain had Liberal Prime Ministers for the next seventeen years. Thus, in defecting to the Liberals, Churchill had not miscalculated.

Campbell-Bannerman came from a Conservative-minded Glasgow family of rich merchants. Nevertheless, it was among the Liberals that he made his political career, becoming the Liberal leader in 1899. His Cabinet consisted largely of imperialist-minded Liberals, whose thinking was very similar to that of the Conservatives, and Radicals who held more progressive views. The Foreign Office was entrusted to Edward Grey. Asquith became Chancellor of the Exchequer and was thus second-in-command, after the Prime Minister. Lloyd George, who was 41 at the time, was given the Board of Trade.

This time, Churchill was not overlooked. He was first offered the post of Chief Secretary to the Treasury. This was a prominent position and, by accepting it, Churchill would have become Asquith's right hand and would have deputised for him in the Commons. It was the most important of the junior ministerial posts, and carried an annual salary of £5,000—considerably more than that usually paid to under-secretaries. The post held out prospects of a Cabinet seat after future reshuffles.

Despite these considerations, Churchill declined this flattering offer and asked to be made Under-Secretary for the Colonies. He would have been unlikely to put up a good performance at the Treasury, whereas the Colonial Office would enable him to operate in his favourite sphere. Furthermore, the post would give him plenty of opportunities to display his initiative, independence and energy. His immediate superior, Lord Elgin, the Secretary for the Colonies, had a poor grasp of colonial matters and, what was more, he sat in the Upper House. Consequently, Churchill was the Colonial Office representative in the Commons.

In accordance with British tradition, each minister and under-secretary has his own private secretary to assist him and prepare material for his use. The post carries great responsibility. Churchill invited Edward Marsh to be his private secretary. Marsh was completely unlike his patron. Tall, lean, invariably sporting a monocle, and speaking in a thin, squeaky voice (resulting from a serious childhood illness), Marsh was a superbly educated intellectual. He was a snob and a dandy, well versed in art and literature, and an editor of poetry. He continued as Churchill's private secretary until 1929, accompanying him from one ministry to another. When their official connections came to an end, Churchill saw to it that this should not affect their personal relationship. Marsh possessed a high level of literary taste and a fine style, and he read and corrected the proofs of all Churchill's books, making considerable stylistic improvements. Their collaboration was only to end in 1953 with Marsh's death.

His relationship with Marsh provides a further instance of Churchill's ability to enlist the services of people who possessed knowledge or qualities that he lacked. In 1903 in a conversation with Beatrice Webb, the well-known student of the British working movement and the country's social problems, Churchill declared: "I never do any brainwork that anyone else can do for me." In her diary Beatrice Webb commented that the remark "shows organising but not thinking capacity".

In July 1902 Winston started work on a biography of his father. This was a completely new kind of book for him. Sitting at his father's writing desk, surrounded by carefully selected material about his life, the recollections of contemporaries, and their letters, Winston immersed himself in the world that had been the stage for Randolph Churchill's activities. The work was completed in November 1905. Winston put more effort into this book than into any of his earlier works. He is even said to have written some of it at dull moments during Parliamentary debates.

The biography of Randolph Churchill was published in two volumes in January 1906. It testified to Winston's maturity as a writer. Despite the six volumes he already had to his credit, Winston Churchill had previously been regarded as a dilettante; now, however, he was granted literary recognition. Subsequently his life developed in such a way

that a full twenty years were to pass before he was able to produce his next major book. The biography of his father earned him about £8,000. This was a very large sum, and he placed the money in Sir Ernest Cassel's bank, as he had done with his earlier royalties.

Parliamentary elections were held in January 1906, and the Liberals were victorious. Churchill stood as a candidate in a Manchester constituency. He found it difficult to imagine life in that large industrial city. Once, as he was walking around Manchester with Marsh, Churchill happened upon a working-class district. "Fancy," he said, "living in one of these streets—never seeing anything beautiful—never eating anything savoury—never saying anything clever." He was not really concerned about the slum-dwellers. He only had anything at all to do with them because he needed their votes. It was a hopeless constituency for Churchill. Yet in 1906, when the main election issue was Free Trade versus Protectionism, he did seem to stand some chance of winning, since Manchester had always been a bulwark of Free Trade.

Churchill had a difficult stance to maintain. His political opponents kept harping on his defection from the Conservatives in order to discredit him in the eyes of the electorate. In campaign addresses they made great play with numerous quotations from his earlier speeches trouncing the Liberal Party with his usual ardour and outspokenness, and praising the Conservatives. They called upon him to explain his earlier remarks. Churchill did his best to parry these attacks. He declared that, while in the Conservative Party, he had talked a great deal of nonsense; but, having realised the idiocy of being a Conservative, he had moved on.

In Manchester, Churchill encountered a new and unexpected enemy. Women were claiming the right to vote, and the Suffragette movement was making great headway throughout Britain. In Manchester the movement was led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her two energetic daughters, Christabel and Sylvia. During one of Churchill's election meetings, the Suffragettes asked him to give a firm undertaking that, if elected to Parliament, he would uphold the cause of female suffrage there. At first, Churchill did not take the question seriously and declined to answer. He was subsequently hounded by Suffragettes at every one of his campaign meetings. They were a source of tremendous irritation to

Churchill, and he later conceived an undying hatred for the movement.

The Free Trade issue helped Churchill to win in Manchester. He was returned to Parliament with a majority of 1,241. The Liberals had 400 seats in the new Parliament, thus gaining a clear majority over all the other parties combined. The Conservatives were able to muster only 157 seats.

The rout of the Conservatives and the convincing triumph of the Liberals were not the only features distinguishing these elections from their forerunners. The elections of 1906 were significant in that the new Parliament contained 30 Labour MPs. Most of them enjoyed the backing of the Labour Representation Committee, set up in 1900. The committee was now renamed the Labour Party. The Labour successes showed that the British working class was emerging as an independent political force. This was a striking result of the rapid activation of the working movement in Britain, which was taking on more and more political overtones. The Russian Revolution of 1905-07 acted as a spur to the working movement in Britain at the time.

The Labour gains were due in large measure to the support given by the Liberals. Representatives of the upper end of the working class had previously been elected to Parliament, though their numbers were very small. They had generally performed in the House as fellow travellers of the Liberal Party. But events were now ushering in a situation in which the British working class would soon set up its own political party to represent it at Westminster. The Liberals were well aware of this development. They did their utmost to bring their influence to bear on the nascent party so as to secure a powerful ally in the House of Commons. It was for this reason that they helped the Labour Representation Committee's candidates to win in the 1906 elections. In 1903 Ramsey MacDonald, the Secretary of the LRC, had concluded a secret deal with one of the Liberal leaders, Herbert Gladstone. The Liberals undertook to support LRC candidates in thirty-five constituencies. In return, MacDonald promised that LRC support for the Liberals would be forthcoming in several other constituencies. The deal made the young Labour Party rather dependent on the Liberals. Furthermore, it pointed to the Labour leaders' lack of principle and their closeness to the Liberals. The 1903 pact,

which was not made public for a long time, remained in force until 1914, and, as one of Churchill's biographers comments, "it loaded the Labour ship with a good deal of Liberal ballast".

The first major issue that Churchill had to tackle at the Colonial Office was the question mark hanging over the former Boer republics. Acording to the peace treaty signed by the Conservative Government with the conquered Boers on 31 May 1902, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had been annexed by Britain and incorporated into the colonial empire. But this could not be the final solution. Many people in Britain realised that, if these territories were left with ordinary colonial status, a further outbreak of armed resistance was more than likely. Moreover, while in Opposition, the Liberals had vehemently criticised Conservative handling of the matter, and so, now in office, they were under a moral obligation to provide a solution of their own.

Having crushed armed Boer resistance, the British Government was much concerned to rehabilitate the economy of the territories it had seized. The reason was simple: British industrialists had a great interest in developing South Africa's gold- and diamond-mining operations, which they found immensely profitable. In order to ensure the supply of manpower, they began to recruit workers in China and then ship them to South Africa, where the poor wretches dragged out a slave-like existence. The organiser of "Chinese Slavery", as the issue came to be known, was Lord Milner, who was in charge of the conquered territories. By the time of the 1906 elections, there were some 50,000 Chinese coolies in South Africa. Many thousands of others had also been recruited and were on their way to Africa.

During the elections the Liberals harried the Conservatives with "Chinese Slavery" for all they were worth. Once in power, however, they evinced no great desire to see the practice abandoned. The roles were now reversed. The Liberals' political opponents accused them of perpetuating the slave labour policy. Churchill had to resort to all kinds of evasions when speaking for the Colonial Office in the Commons. When he was asked bluntly whether the use in South Africa of workers recruited in China could really be called slavery, he tried to blur the outlines by replying that it could not "be classified as slavery in the extreme acceptance

of the word without some risk of terminological inexactitude".

In 1906 the British Government decided to grant the conquered Boer republics self-government within the framework of the British Empire. Winston Churchill was instructed to introduce the appropriate bill in the Commons and to see that it was passed. British politicians and historians claim repeatedly that Britain's granting of self-government to the Boers was an act of supreme generosity. This claim is actually quite unfounded. Before Britain seized the Boer territories, the Boers were independent. Britain employed force to terminate this independence, incorporated the Boers into her colonial empire and then granted them a measure of self-government. The territories were seized so that they could be exploited, but this required Boer co-operation. The granting of self-government was a minimal price to pay for it. Finally, it was necessary to pave the way for the influx into the conquered territories of British capital, free enterprise and immigrants from the metropolis. Churchill conveyed to King Edward VII his view that the transition from a Crown Colony to responsible government was good for British emigration.

Following negotiations between the British Government and the Boers, in 1909 Parliament passed the South Africa Act, which set up a Union of South Africa, consisting of four provinces. The act came into force on 31 May 1910. South Africa became a dominion (a self-governing colony) within the British Empire. This status had earlier been conferred on Canada (1867), Australia (1901) and New Zealand (1907).

The deal with the Boer leaders was concluded at the expense of the local Black population, which formed the overwhelming majority in South Africa. The Blacks were granted no rights at all. The Boers ruled the local people by dictatorial methods and exploited them mercilessly. The British Liberals sided with the Boers against them. The Africans were quick to realise this, and in 1912 they set up their own organisation, the African National Congress, for the struggle to gain political rights.

The emergence of the Labour Party and the formation of a Labour group in Parliament showed that the domestic political situation in Britain was undergoing a radical change. Many people in the country regarded the new party as socialist by analogy with the Social-Democratic parties that

existed elsewhere in Europe. The socialist movement was rapidly gaining strength in the countries of Europe, and the year 1905 saw the outbreak of revolution in Russia. Various socialist organisations and societies were also active in Britain by then. Churchill had to decide what attitude to adopt towards these developments.

His secretary, Edward Marsh, was rather surprised in August 1906 when Churchill, who was on holiday in Switzerland, asked him to send out the text of a speech attacking socialism made by France's Minister of the Interior, Georges Clemenceau.

In October 1906 Churchill made a speech in Glasgow in which he presented his attitude towards socialism. He claimed that the British working class did not need a political party of its own, since its interests were expressed and represented by the trade unions. "Labour! It is a great word," he said. "Who has the right to speak for Labour? I am inclined to think ... it is the trade unions that more than any other organisation must be considered the responsible and deputed representatives of Labour." It should be recalled at this point that the trade union representatives in Parliament were then aligned with the Liberals, while the Labour group tried to operate, to some extent, independently.

The speaker insisted that there was no point in the working class's having its own organised representation in Parliament, since the workers were adequately represented in the Commons by the Liberals. What was more, the working class could only lose out by independent representation. Churchill urged the working class to entrust its political and other interests to the Liberals, i.e. the party of the British bourgeoisie. This call to abandon the idea of independent workers' representation in Parliament was, in effect, an appeal to the workers to refrain from political struggle on their own.

Churchill naturally realised that there would be a large number of people within the working class who would prefer to struggle for their interests independently and would employ revolutionary methods. He left his audience in no doubt as to his own attitude: he was totally unsympathetic and hostile towards the revolutionary movement. "Any violent movement," he declared, "would infallibly encounter an overwhelming resistance from millions of persons who would certainly lose by anything like a general overturn." He

added that millions of "haves" would "put up an effective resistance which would bring any such movement to sterility and to destruction". Having adopted this posture in 1906, Churchill was never to modify it.

He went on to say in his Glasgow speech that he saw no need to "plunge into a discussion of the philosophical divergencies between Socialism and Liberalism". This is hardly surprising. He was ill-equipped to combat socialist ideas on the theoretical plane. He never read Marx and is unlikely to have looked at any of the popular works on Marxism. He knew Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the major ideologists of British opportunism at the time, but they were not close friends of his. The problems which the Webbs devoted their lives to studying never held any attraction for Churchill.

He did not fully grasp the difference between revolutionary socialism and the opportunism practised by the British Labour Party, and so, when talking about socialists, he often confused the two things. He reduced socialist doctrine to collectivism, and Liberal doctrine to individualism, and doggedly sought to prove that there was no fundamental difference between individualism and collectivism, that the difference between them had been thought up by socialists, and that, in fact, Liberal individualism and socialist collectivism came together in close unity in everyday life. "Collectively we light our streets and supply ourselves with water," he said in Glasgow. "But we do not make love collectively, and the ladies do not marry us collectively." However, the ideas that Churchill was then developing had been largely evoked by the British Labour theoreticians who were active early in the 20th century, and particularly by the Webbs. Churchill borrowed ideas from both the Webbs and the books in circulation at the time. His closest friend, the Conservative F.E. Smith, once stated in the Commons: "The Socialists had better not cheer the name of Mr. Churchill, for he will most likely in the end steal their clothes when they go bathing—if they do bathe, which I doubt." Churchill's speech in Glasgow shows that F.E. Smith's words came true: Churchill really was impudently scrambling into Labour clothes.

Acknowledging that the country's monopolisation was against the interests of the working people, he campaigned for state intervention in the economy and the establishment

of state control over it. He called on the state to try to intervene in the use of manpower by acting as a standby employer. He also favoured nationalisation of the railways and the state provision of social security.

One should not lose sight of the fact that Churchill delivered this speech in 1906. Its content recalls many of those made by Labour leaders after the Second World War.

It goes without saying that Churchill's Glasgow pronouncements were lacking in sincerity. Even his most favourable biographers take the view that the ideas he preached in Glasgow were out of tune with both his own and his father's convictions.

In a very short time he showed himself to be an energetic junior minister, highly industrious and capable of taking initiative. The powers-that-be were coming to realise that, if Winston were given power, he would zealously serve the interests of capitalist Britain, since the realisation of his own ambitious designs was closely bound up with the good fortunes of the British imperialist state. A member of the retinue of King Edward VII wrote to Churchill on 20 August 1906: "His Majesty is glad to see that you are becoming a reliable minister and above all a serious politician, which can only be attained by putting country before party". In May 1907 Churchill's services were given official recognition. He was made a Privy Councillor, an honour rarely bestowed on 32-year-old under-secretaries. From then on, Churchill had the right to append to his name the letters "P.C." (Privy Councillor) as well as "M.P." (Member of Parliament).

Meanwhile, relations between the Great Powers were steadily worsening. Forces were aligned in readiness for the First World War. In 1907 Britain finally reached agreement with Russia, thus putting the finishing touches to the Entente—a military alliance aimed against Germany and her partners. War seemed imminent, and that was probably why Churchill began to take an interest in military matters. He had always found the military sphere attractive. He was convinced that, if war broke out, the Navy would be Britain's principal weapon. In 1907 he formed close contacts with Admiral Fisher, who was then busy reorganising the Navy. Previously the Navy had been structured so as to operate on the high seas, sailing from colonial bases, but now Fisher was concentrating it in European waters, against Germany. The relatively small gunboats that were suitable only for "police

functions" in the colonies were being replaced by powerful ships capable of operating against the German Navy. Fisher introduced into the Royal Navy the powerful battleships of the Dreadnought class, armed with 13.5-inch guns. Contact with Fisher gave Churchill a detailed knowledge of the current state and planned development of the British Navy.

Churchill's first, impressive successes as a politician strengthened his conviction that a great future was destined to be his. He showed a growing interest in Napoleon, whom he never stopped admiring. When setting off on a lengthy tour of Britain's African possessions in 1907, Churchill took along a large packet of books on Napoleon and studied them.

Despite his ministerial position, Churchill agreed to send the Liberal *Strand Magazine* articles on his travels for a fee of £150 per article. One of his friends, the newspaper publisher Charles Masterman, later recalled how Churchill had come to his office, just before going off to Africa, so as to finish off an article called "A Party in Ruins". Masterman wrote that Churchill concluded the article with the words: "Where is the statesman to be found who is adequate to the times?", expecting, as he supposed, only one answer.

Chance assisted Churchill to take the next step along the road to power. The Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman was seriously ill, and it became clear at the end of 1907 that he had not long to live. This meant that there would shortly be a new Prime Minister and a government reshuffle. Churchill was determined to secure a seat in the Cabinet. In Britain ministers who are members of the Cabinet form a narrow group which is, in effect, the Government. They possess power in its entirety. Other ministers, belonging to a second echelon, head the various departments, but are not members of the Cabinet. Their role and influence are far less pronounced.

Campbell-Bannerman was well aware that Churchill was seeking a place in the Cabinet, but he would not consider the idea. He could not stand "young men in a hurry". Churchill's aspirations were also known to the King, but His Majesty considered that he should wait until a senior ministerial post became vacant, which he could then fill.

Campbell-Bannerman resigned in April 1908. Asquith became Prime Minister, and he formed a government of his own choosing. He offered Churchill the post of First Lord of the Admiralty. After weighing all the pros and cons,

Churchill decided to decline the offer. It was still uncertain when the war would start, and the Admiralty held out few opportunities that would safisfy his impatient and dynamic disposition. Asquith then offered him the Local Government Board, where there was much to be done in the social sphere. But Churchill had never taken any interest in social problems, and he declined that offer too. Instead, he decided he would accept the presidency of the Board of Trade, even though the post was not very highly rated. He was not deterred by the fact that the President of the BoT was paid £2,000 a year, while many other ministers earned £5,000. The crucial point was that the position carried with it a seat in the Cabinet. The BoT might also prove to be a good springboard for a further leap upwards.

At that time the rule was still in force that a minister who secured a seat in the Cabinet had to stand again in Parliamentary elections and thus have his mandate renewed. This regulation had existed ever since the time of Cromwell and was shortly to be annulled by the next Conservative Government. As matters stood, however, Churchill was obliged to embark on a difficult electoral campaign.

Circumstances were against him. The Liberal Party had fulfilled hardly any of its electoral pledges. This is more or less the norm in British politics, but the Liberal position was made worse by the fact that prices were rising and so real earnings were diminishing. The pound was also having a bad time owing to stiffening competition from American and German heavy industry and Japanese shipbuilding. The purchasing power of sterling was falling slowly but surely. In 1908 the British worker was considerably worse off than he had been in 1900, but the Liberal Government seemed not to have noticed. There was growing tension between unions and employers, and class antagonisms were rampant throughout the country.

The Suffragettes were still active, as they had been at the previous elections. They wanted Churchill to commit himself to supporting the enfranchisement of women. Churchill used to fob them off with vague statements such as "Trust me, ladies".

Churchill was defeated in his Manchester constituency. When the result was announced, a Suffragette grabbed his arm and shouted that women were responsible for his downfall. Churchill was furious and gave a rude answer. It

was not just a matter of energetic women maligning Churchill as a politician; he was still hounded by his turncoat image. The Conservatives loathed him and regarded him as a traitor to his class. The Conservative press, which had previously been delighted to print his articles, had now turned against him. Churchill's biographers agree that his electoral defeat was largely due to a successful Conservative campaign to portray him as unreliable and totally unscrupulous.

The electoral returns had been announced at the Town Hall, and the situation looked gloomy and hopeless. But Churchill's luck held. It took him just 5-6 minutes to make his way from the Town Hall to the Reform Club. Awaiting him there he found a telegram from the Liberal organisation in Dundee, Scotland, inviting him to stand as the Liberal candidate there. This development occurred because the Liberals had foreseen that Churchill might not survive in Manchester. The Dundee constituency was far safer: it had always returned Liberal candidates to Parliament for over half a century. Winston naturally accepted the invitation and was soon on his way to Scotland.

It was a safe constituency, but the going was hard nevertheless. Suffragettes followed Churchill from Manchester to Dundee and disrupted his campaign meetings. Their methods were simple: as soon as Churchill started to speak, they rang bells hard and long. In his Dundee speeches Churchill violently attacked the socialists—probably because he had been rejected in working-class Manchester. He declared himself to be a determined and consistent enemy of socialism. Churchill's speeches in Dundee put the finishing touches to his anti-socialist stance.

Churchill was returned in Dundee with a sizeable majority. For the next fifteen years he was to represent that consituency at Westminster. His victory in Dundee was followed by an even more important event in his life—he got married.

The young minister was very much in the public gaze, he appeared to have a brilliant political career ahead of him, and so there were always plenty of prospective brides. But he showed little interest in women, and maintained a strict position in the matter. His main purpose in life was his political career. He knew from his uncle's experience, if from nothing else, that an imprudent love affair could shatter a political career once and for all, and so he never exposed

himself to such a risk. Whenever he visited clubs or homes, it was with the conscious aim of meeting friends and discussing political matters that were of interest. At evening parties, he took no interest in fashionable pleasures and dancing. He remained faithful to the habits of Savrola, which he had described earlier. Churchill's contemporaries recall that he carried on working even when visiting friends. Whenever he went to stay with someone for a weekend, he always brought a small metal case full of books and various notes. He would spend every free minute absorbed in a book.

This way of life led his friends to suppose that Winston had decided to remain a bachelor. On 15 August 1908, however, it was announced that he was engaged to be married to 23-year-old Clementine Hozier. Churchill's contemporaries point out that he did not marry money. It is true that Clementine did not bring him a rich dowry, but she belonged to the same circle as Winston. Her mother was a daughter of Lord Airlie and was descended from a well-known Irish-Scottish aristocratic family. The family was very influential in Churchill's new constituency of Dundee. Clementine's father was a colonel in a dragoon regiment. She herself spoke fluent French and German, was well educated, and possessed a quick intelligence and a good sense of humour. She took a lively interest in politics and, as her contemporaries acknowledge, was a very attractive and beautiful woman.

Loyd George was a witness at Churchill's wedding, and the best man was Lord Hugh Cecil, his old "Hooligan" friend in the Conservative Party and now, in 1908, one of his dedicated political enemies. This fact illustrates an interesting feature of British politics. People can abuse one another in the Commons and at political meetings as though they were deadly enemies, and yet remain good friends and be closely associated in private life. Churchill was on just such terms with many Conservatives, with Lord Hugh Cecil, F.E. Smith and a number of other prominent figures.

This state of affairs is probably best explained by the fact that, for bourgeois politicians, the struggle in which they engage in Parliament is to a considerable extent, like a well-planned performance, staged with certain political objectives in view. Henry Pelling comments: "Churchill's tendency to mix with Opposition leaders was a sign that he did not take the party system as seriously as some of his colleagues did." In his younger days Churchill had written to

his mother: "It is a fine game to play—the game of politics". It is hardly surprising that the actors often come together behind the scenes as the best of friends. The main point is that they share common class interests and common aims, and they belong to the same social milieu.

By the time he was 33, the course of Winston Churchill's life had thus been fully determined. He had achieved great success as a politician: he represented a safe constituency in the Commons, was a member of the Cabinet, wielded considerable influence and was at the centre of events. It was now generally recognised that the "young man in a hurry" had come to maturity.

Chapter 4

The Liberal Politician

The Board of Trade, which Winston took over in April 1908, was a body that performed a series of completely different functions. Its jurisdiction extended to matters of trade, industry and navigation, but it also dealt with the railways, copyright, patents, employment and, consequently, the settling of disputes between workers and employers. All this was entrusted to the young minister Winston Churchill. His first act, after entering his new office, was to place a small bronze bust of Napoleon on his desk. Throughout the first part of Churchill's political career—the "Napoleonic period", as it has been called—this bust travelled with its owner from one ministry to another.

The Board of Trade enabled Churchill not only to handle the various matters for which he was directly responsible, but also to make inroads into many adjacent spheres, and particularly the field of social problems. He made abundant use of these opportunities to establish a reputation as a politician of broad scope.

The new President of the Board of Trade steered through Parliament an act setting up the unified Port of London Authority which helped to streamline the port's functioning. Next he managed to establish an eight-hour working day in the coal-mining industry. This was the Liberal Government's response to the intensification of the class struggle in the mining areas. It is interesting to note that this piece of

legislation was opposed by the newly elected Conservative MP Stanley Baldwin, with whom Churchill was later both to work in close cooperation and to fight bitterly.

The growing class antagonisms in the country caused great anxiety among Britain's ruling circles. The Liberal Government was ready to make a number of far-reaching concessions to the working people so as to ensure peace between the classes. Churchill sensed that great events were in the making here, and he resolved to play an active part in them. He extended his contacts with people engaged in the study of social problems, and particularly with members of the Fabian Society, which had been founded by the Webbs. It was these contacts that gave Churchill the idea that it was necessary to set up Labour Exchanges.

Churchill took the view that Labour Exchanges would do something to quell the country's alarm at the rise in unemployment. They were intended to help the jobless to find work, and the employers to take on manpower. It sometimes happened that unemployment in one locality coincided with a labour shortage in another. Labour Exchanges would thus boost mobility in the workforce. At the same time, they would relieve employers of recruitment costs. In September 1909 Churchill appointed William Beveridge as director of the BoT's Labour Exchanges. Beveridge was subsequently to become well known for his proposals in the field of social reform.

Churchill was no expert in social problems either then or later. He never liked dealing with them, and so, while he was at the Board of Trade, his social onslaught was fuelled by the ideas of other people. He used either the Webbs' ideas or those of Lloyd George, who realised better than anyone else in the Government the danger posed to the class interests of the British bourgeoisie by any worsening of social problems. Lloyd George stated subsequently that he had disclosed his own plans in the field to Churchill once Churchill had become President of the Board of Trade. Winston immediately set to work on some of the ideas put forward by Lloyd George, and he obtained Prime Minister Asquith's permission to draw up the appropriate legislation. The act setting up Labour Exchanges was followed by the National Insurance Act; Churchill was responsible for the section dealing with unemployment insurance. Old age pensions were introduced, as well as insurance against sickness, disablement and

industrial injury. Churchill worked on these matters for three or four years.

Lloyd George and Churchill, who adopted his ideas, promoted social reform so as to gain working-olass support for the Liberal Party. They were trying to engage the sympathies of the workers and to neutralise the influence of the Labour Party, which was then on the left flank of the British political front. As the prominent historian Elie Halévy points out, the strategy of Lloyd George and Churchill was one of "anticipating the demands of the working class" and showing that it had considerably more to gain from the Liberals than from the Labour Party.

Lloyd George was a man of very humble origins. He grew up in the family of his uncle, who was a cobbler, and later made his reputation as a solicitor. Churchill records that, when he first met Lloyd George, he was struck by his deep knowledge of how the people lived. This was what Churchill himself lacked, and he drew constantly on his friend's knowledge and experience.

At that time, Lloyd George, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Churchill represented the group in the Liberal Party that was most consistently in favour of social reform. Such leaders as Asquith, Grey and Haldane, representing the right wing in the Government, took considerably less interest in social matters.

The attitudes towards social reform displayed by Lloyd George and Churchill were far from indentical. Himself a man of the people, Lloyd George went much further in his promises to ordinary people and in his view of the extent of the reforms needed than the aristocratic Churchill, who feared that his colleague's statements might give rise to action on the part of working people that would not be to the liking of the bourgeoisie.

A Conservative newspaper dubbed the two politicians "Cleon and Alcibiades", names which stuck to them for several years. Cleon was a tanner who lived in fifth-century Athens and came to be a "demagogue", a leader of the ordinary people. Alcibiades was a disaffected Athenian aristocrat who several times betrayed Athens to Sparta, and vice versa.

The twentieth-century Cleon and Alcibiades were firm friends, or so it might have appeared to their contemporaries. Yet the more perspicacious assumed that Churchill and Lloyd

George were locked in a hidden struggle to determine who would succeed Asquith as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party. There was probably a fair amount of truth in this supposition.

Churchill interpreted the functions of the Board of Trade very broadly. Before two years were out, the Board had also assumed the functions of a Ministry of Labour. This expansion attracted official Government recognition, and a special Act of Parliament was passed, enabling the salary of the President of the BoT to be raised from £2,000 to £5,000 a year. He thus became a senior minister. Churchill decided, however, that the increase should only take effect when he passed on the post to someone else—a gesture that hit the headlines.

The Conservative Party opposed the policy of social reform that was being pursued by the Liberals. One after another, Government Bills were passed in the Commons, where the Liberals had a majority, but rejected by the Lords, which consisted overwhelmingly of Conservatives.

Unlike Commons MPs, the Members of the House of Lords were not elected by anyone, but assumed their seats upon inheriting a title. The upper crust of the Lords was formed, as it still is, by dukes, who received vast incomes from their enormous estates. At the beginning of the century, the Duke of Sutherland's estates covered 1,250,000 acres. Similar quantities of land were owned by the Dukes of Richmond, Westminster, Bedford, Portland, Devonshire and Northumberland. Lord Derby, known as the "King of Lancashire", owned 70,000 acres of land, which earned him an annual income of some £100,000. These and other peers were naturally conservative in outlook and loyally supported the Conservative Party. The House of Lords, thus constituted, had the right to veto any Bill that was passed in the Commons. (There was just one exception: the Lords could not amend Bills concerned with finance.) Thus, the Upper House could frustrate virtually any Government measure, even though it had received approval in the Commons.

During the 1906 electoral campaign, when the Liberals outlined their plans for social reform, the Conservatives tried to frighten them by referring to the House of Lords. Arthur Balfour declared that "whether in power or whether in opposition the great Unionist Party will always control the destinies of this great empire". Informed opinion regarded

this as a threat to use the Lords to block any Liberal moves that the Conservatives did not like. The future was soon to show that this view was correct. During the Liberals' first year in office, the Lords blocked just about all their proposed legislation, including even a modest educational reform.

The Liberals realised that, although they had an overwhelming majority in the Commons, they could only carry out their reforms by overcoming the resistance of the Lords. In December 1906 Campbell-Bannerman declared that the conduct of the Lords was "plainly intolerable", and added that "a way must be found, and a way will be found, by which the will of the people, expressed through their elected representatives in this House, will be made to prevail". Churchill saw immediately that a bitter and protracted battle over the issue lay ahead, nor did he doubt for one moment that he ought to take an active part in it. He liked any battle for its own sake and could not remain just a bystander. Admittedly, matters of this sort had no direct connection with the Board of Trade, but Churchill needed to make his name as a real statesman, and so he had no wish to be confined to the functions of the department directly entrusted to him.

In 1907 a friend of Churchill's, Henry Massingham, started up a radical weekly called *The Nation*. The second issue, which appeared on 9 March, carried an article by Churchill on the House of Lords. He said that there were two ways of solving the problem: either the majority in the Lords could, in each new Parliament, be made to correspond politically to the Commons majority, or the Upper House could be deprived of its power to block decisions that had been passed by a majority in the Commons. The tenor of the article suggested that Churchill favoured the first method.

In June 1907 Campbell-Bannerman moved in the Commons that the powers of the House of Lords should be restricted, so that the Commons decision on any issue would prevail. The Liberal leader and Prime Minister was thus proposing to use the second of the two methods mentioned in Churchill's article. This did not prevent Churchill from taking an active part in the debates on the Bill and energetically supporting Campbell-Bannerman's suggestion. Churchill thus acted as though the arguments he had adduced in *The Nation* had been put forward by someone else. The Bill was passed by the Commons.

This was the first attack on the Conservative stronghold in the Lords, and Churchill was right in the front line. This was no easy matter for him: in attacking the Lords, which consisted primarily of people belonging to the "great families" of England, he was attacking the environment in which he had been born and bred, and which had stood him in good stead while he had been shaping a career for himself in the Army, in journalism and in politics. The House of Marlborough had close ties with nearly all the country's aristocratic families. By attacking the Lords, Churchill upset all these intricate ties of kinship. The doors of the aristocratic families slammed shut in his face. He was constantly accused of "fouling his own nest". Naturally, Churchill had known what to expect, but he had joined the Liberal onslaught nonetheless. He realised that the future lay with the Commons.

In order to give effect to the measures limiting the powers of the House of Lords, the Liberals had to refer the issue to the electorate. It was therefore tactically to their advantage that the Lords should continue to reject all their Bills. However, the Conservatives were alive to the danger and adopted a more cautious policy. The Upper House gave its immediate approval to Bills affecting the trade unions (e.g. the Act stipulating an eight-hour working day for miners). By this means, the Conservatives endeavoured to gain the workers' support in the forthcoming Parliamentary elections.

Churchill took part in the drive to reform the House of Lords, but he tried to be careful. His speeches were milder than Lloyd George's. While Lloyd George occasionally unveiled the class significance of the Lords issue, Churchill took a legalistic approach, seeing the question in purely constitutional terms. Churchill's speeches were marked by an uncharacteristic restraint. He refrained from personalising the issue, and acted throughout as a "constitutionalist". He maintained this position for several years, while public attention was focused on the Lords issue.

In the matter of the Upper House, Churchill embraced the view that ultimately triumphed, but he made a gross tactical blunder over expenditure on the Army and Navy. As President of the Board of Trade, he need not have become actively involved in the quistion at all. But Churchill made his own rules, and he was unable to remain neutral in any controversy.

Relations between Britain and Germany were steadily deteriorating. The First World War was drawing irrevocably closer, and Army and Naval authorities were anxious to expand Britain's armed forces. When, in 1908, the Secretary for War, Robert Haldane, called for an increase in Army expenditure, Churchill and Lloyd George spoke against him. They favoured cutting military spending so that more money could be allocated to social reform. Lloyd George was more cautious here than his friend, and was prepared to compromise. But Churchill took up an uncompromising position. On 18 June 1908 he produced a memorandum in which he argued that the British Army was too large, that it was very expensive to maintain, and that reductions were essential. Knowing that he had the backing of influential members of the Government—Asquith, Grey and several others—Haldane decided to fight Churchill and Lloyd George. He proved that "the British Army staffs were proportionately lower than those of seven other leading Powers". At a Cabinet meeting he declared that the expansion of the Army was also required by "certain Treaty obligations which might compel us to intervene on the Continent". The fact that, as Haldane hinted, Britain was bound by treaty obligations was known only to a very small group of leading ministers. Churchill was not one of them.

While taking part in the arguments over Army expenditure, Churchill had inevitably to delve into foreign policy. Later he was to develop a great liking for such matters, and he came to have quite a good understanding of them. At the time, however, he proved unable to correctly appraise Britain's position in the world and the nature of her relations with Germany. Speaking on 15 August 1908, he declared that he did not agree with the claims that there was increasing antagonism between Britain and Germany, and he voiced his regret at the warnings then current about the growth of the German menace. Churchill categorically rejected the idea that war with Germany was inevitable, and he stated that nowhere in the world was there any cause for conflict between the interests of Britain and Germany.

These assertions had a naive ring to them. What was more, they ran counter to Government policy and irritated both the leading members of the Cabinet and the King. The King actually conveyed his displeasure to Churchill and to Lloyd George, who also made foreign policy statements in

the same vein. Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, called Lloyd George and Churchill to order. He pointed to the errors in a number of Churchill's assertions and to the undesirability of his continuing to make public pronouncements on foreign policy.

Churchill's opposition to increased expenditure on the Army was a failure. The Government supported Haldane, and Churchill remained in the minority His campaign against any expansion of the Royal Navy ended in the same way.

It is hard to see why Churchill decided to oppose the Admiralty's naval programme, since he had always considered it essential for Britain to have a powerful navy. He had been in close agreement on this point with Admiral Fisher in 1907. Yet, when, in the spring of 1909, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, behind whom stood Fisher, stated that six Drednoughts should be built in response to the German naval programme adopted in 1908, Churchill unexpectedly challenged the Admiralty's plans. Fisher brought pressure to bear on the Government through various channels in order to make sure the Navy was enlarged. He made wide use of the press for this purpose. In January 1908 Joseph Chamberlain's man in the newspaper world, J.L. Garvin, had become editor of the *Sunday Observer*. Fisher made contact with Garvin and passed on to him secret information about the struggle over the naval programme that was going on in government circles. Garvin skilfully used this information in his paper as he campaigned for the expansion of the Royal Navy.

Churchill and Lloyd George were the most outspoken of those who were opposed to any increase in naval construction. They were prepared to agree to the building of four new Dreadnoughts, but categorically rejected the Admiralty's demand for six ships. Matters came to a head when, in February 1909, Churchill, Lloyd George and two other Cabinet members, John Morley and John Burns, threatened to resign if the Government consented to the Admiralty plan.

Churchill had adopted the most uncompromising position in the group, but he backed down at the last minute and so did not make a false move. If he had carried out his threat to resign, he would have shared his father's fate. Randolph's bitter experience probably put him on his guard against taking any dangerous step.

The arguments within the Government ended in a decision to build eight Dreadnoughts—two more than the Admiralty had asked for. Churchill had suffered a major setback. He was later to acknowledge that he had been wrong. The wrangle earned him the displeasure of both influential admirals and the Foreign Office.

As he resisted McKenna and Fisher, Churchill came into contact with their opponents in the Admiralty, the group led by Admiral Charles Beresford. Fisher was highly indignant. Not so long before, he had listened to Churchill's assurances that he was in full agreement with the Admiral's views and plans. "Winston Churchill," Fisher wrote at the time, "has been a double-dyed traitor." The Admiral had once been an admirer of Churchill's, but he now regarded him with contempt. All Churchill's attempts to restore their old relationship were flatly rejected. His ingratiating letters to Fisher were answered politely but negatively. One of his replies included the remark: "I think it would be quite lovely to call the four extra Dreadnoughts: (1) *Winston*, (2) *Churchill*, (3) *Lloyd*, (4) *George*".

On 29 April 1909 Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented his annual budget proposals in the Commons. They provided for additional taxation amounting to £14 million, a modest sum even in those days. The extra revenue was to cover increased military expenditure and National Insurance costs. In his four-hour budget speech in Parliament, Lloyd George naturally kept quiet about military spending and highlighted the social benefits that would accrue. The budget would further raise income tax and the inheritance tax, and would introduce a land tax. In absolute terms, the new taxes did not add up to very much, but the landowners regarded the matter as one of principle and gave Lloyd George's budget a hostile reception. A fierce political struggle began, and the controversy soon spread to the question of the powers of the Upper House.

The Conservatives vehemently opposed the Liberal budget even though it provided for increased expenditure on strengthening the Navy. They accused Lloyd George of fomenting social revolution. The Labour financial specialist Philip Snowden claimed that the thinking behind Lloyd George's budget was borrowed from his pamphlet *The Socialist Budget*. The Chancellor was not very worried about Labour allegations of plagiarism. The budget was framed so

as to enlist the support of the masses, and Lloyd George never lost an opportunity of referring to it as "the People's Budget".

Clearly, the House of Lords would almost certainly reject the proposed budget, thus showing the justice of Liberal claims that its powers needed to be limited. The Conservative leaders Balfour and Lansdowne realised this and were inclined to sanction the budget. But most Conservatives opposed it.

The political struggle spread beyond the confines of Westminster to the country at large. A Budget League was formed to campaign for the budget's acceptance, and Churchill became its president. But he was extremely apprehensive about the passions that were being stirred. In his heart of hearts Churchill sometimes feared that Lloyd George's demagogy might spark off a revolution in Britain. At dinner one evening, Lloyd George jokingly passed the remark that it might be quite a good idea to start a revolution and erect a guillotine in Trafalgar Square. It was intended as a joke, and all the guests reacted accordingly. But Churchill refused to accept the joke.

Although Winston supported the new budget, he very much disliked Lloyd George's encroaching on the traditional rights of the landowners and the upper fringes of the bourgeoisie. Nor was he impressed by the calls to terminate the powers of the House of Lords. He therefore took the view that the Lords should be reformed through a limitation of its constitutional powers.

The budget submitted by Lloyd George was passed by the Commons on 4 November 1909. On 30 November, despite the advice of the King and a number of Conservative leaders, the House of Lords rejected the budget. Since it was a financial matter, this was an infringement of constitutional rights and traditions of a sort that had not been seen in Britain for 250 years. In December the Commons passed a resolution accusing the House of Lords of acting unconstitutionally and usurping the powers of the House of Commons. The Government dissolved the Commons and decided that fresh Parliamentary elections would be held in January 1910.

This was an ill-considered step by the Government and reflected its hesitation in the campaign against the Lords. Instead of making use of its firm majority in the Commons and fighting staunchly against the Lords, the Government

appealed to the electorate, whose verdict might not be the one it sought. And such indeed was the outcome. The result of the elections held on 9 February 1910 amounted to a defeat for the Liberal Party. The number of Liberal seats in Parliament shrank from 400 to 275. The Conservatives increased their representation from 157 seats to 273. The Irish Nationalist won 82 seats, and the Labour Party 40. The Liberals thus lost their overall majority and could only govern with the backing of the Irish and Labour groups. They were, in effect, completely hamstrung.

Churchill had mounted a successful campaign in Dundee and was returned to Westminster. He had again been hounded by the Suffragettes, whose pet hate he seemed to be. They had previously sought to disrupt his campaign meetings, but now they attempted to do him actual bodily harm. They threw lumps of coal at Churchill and once even tried to use a horsewhip on his face. In the end, Churchill had to be constantly attended by a couple of bodyguards. Watch was also kept on his small daughter, Diana, whom the Suffragettes threatened to abduct. All this notwithstanding, Churchill emerged from Dundee with a solid majority behind him.

The Liberals remained in office after the election. Asquith saw no need to carry out a major government reshuffle. He only found it necessary to replace the Chief secretary for Ireland and the Home Secretary. The first change was thought essential because the Government's dependence on the Irish MPs obliged it to return to the question of Home Rule for Ireland. As for the Home Secretary, the growing number of strikes and other demonstrations by the working class, which were gaining momentum, required the appointment of a man of firmness and determination. Churchill was invited to choose one of these posts. The Irish Question was intricate and difficult; more than one minister had already come to grief over the issue, and Churchill was well aware of this. He feared that, if he took on the Irish job, he would probably not win any glory and might well founder. He therefore accepted the Home Office.

At the age of 35, then, Churchill became Home Secretary, a position which was at the time invested with far-reaching powers. The Home Office controlled all the prisons and borstals, the Metropolitan Police and the London

Fire Brigade, immigration, roads, bridges, canals, mines, agriculture and fisheries, public safety, public morality and so on. The Home Office possessed certain powers with regard to the holding of Parliamentary elections and advised the King on the granting of clemency to criminals. The Home Secretary also had to attend the birth of royal princes and princesses. It fell to him to proclaim the heir to the throne and the new King as he acceded to the throne. In addition to all these varied functions, Churchill was also responsible for drafting daily letters to the King keeping him informed of the course of Parliamentary debates.

The last elections had brought about a situation in which the Liberals and Conservatives commanded an equal number of votes. This forced the Liberals to seek an arrangement with the Conservatives. The equilibrium in the Commons gave rise to the idea of a coalition government. The sustained momentum of the strike movement was another major factor making it necessary for the Liberals and Conservatives to join forces, and the desirability of such a course was further indicated by the growing tension in Britain's relations with several other countries and by the signs that war was imminent. In May 1910 *The Observer* appealed for "a truce of God" and suggested that an inter-party conference should be held in order to resolve the problem of the Lords. The idea was aired for some time, and both Churchill and Lloyd George seized on it avidly.

The planned coalition with the Conservatives held out a number of personal attractions for Churchill and Lloyd George. Lloyd George saw it as a way of possibly unseating Asquith as Prime Minister and leader of the party and, naturally, of occupying both posts himself. This also prompted Lloyd George's idea of forming "a Government of Business Men" for the purpose of "getting something solid done" over matters of urgency.

A coalition with the Conservatives would help Churchill to find his way back to the Conservative Party or at least to bring about a reconciliation. The campaign of abuse which the Conservatives had been waging against the defector was still continuing and was even gaining in intensity. Churchill pretended to be unconcerned and tried to laugh off the Conservative attacks, but his jokes were becoming more and more sombre. In any case, he had by this time come round to the view that he needed to establish normal relations with his

old party. When Lloyd George advanced the idea of a coalition with the Conservatives, Churchill enthusiastically offered his assistance.

Both men had frequent meetings with the prominent Conservative F.E. Smith, and they discussed how cooperation with the Conservative Party could be effected. Lloyd George drafted a memorandum on the possible foundations of a coalition. Since the Lords reform issue was the chief problem in relations with the Conservatives at the time, Churchill set to work on the basis for a reform that would be acceptable to both parties. Churchill and Lloyd George had to acquaint Asquith with their plans. The Prime Minister understood the need for a coalition with the Conservatives or, rather, the impossibility of the Liberals' being able to resolve single-handedly the major problems confronting the ruling circles at the time. He therefore approved the idea submitted by Lloyd George and Churchill, and broached the matter with the Conservative leader, Arthur Balfour. Balfour also agreed to "a truce of God".

Both parties assigned a group of prominent members to negotiate in what came to be known as a "constitutional conference". Churchill was excluded from the talks. This was a severe blow to his self-esteem, but he had to face the fact that the Liberals could not make him one of their representatives in the talks with the Conservatives, since this would have deeply offended their political opponents and would only have complicated the conclusion of an agreement. The conference was being called to unearth what united, rather than divided, the two parties.

Churchill's future largely depended on the outcome of the conference. If it ended successfully, it would produce a decision to set up a coalition government. In view of the Conservatives' attitude towards Churchill, it was fairly safe to expect them to demand that Churchill should not be included in the coalition government. Moreover, since leaving the Conservatives, he had not sunk very deep roots in the Liberal Party and, to all intents and purposes, was an outsider; so the Liberals would probably not put up a very stubborn fight on his behalf and might well sacrifice him. This would put paid to his political career. Thus, on the one hand, Churchill had an interest in establishing a coalition with the Conservatives in the hope that, by this means, he might restore normal relations with them and come once

more to be on friendly terms with a party whose beliefs approximated to his own, while, on the other hand, he was much afraid that alliance with the Conservatives might be political disaster for him personally.

On 17 August 1910 Lloyd George prepared a detailed memorandum arguing the need for a coalition between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The formation of a coalition was previously held to be warranted by the crisis over the House of Lords, but now Lloyd George was asserting that the coalition ought to be a long-term arrangement. It was needed so that the country could deal with the growing danger that the British economy was facing as a result of the industrial expansion of Britain's competitors—the USA and Germany. The British economy needed restructuring if the country was to successfully resist its dangerous rivals. A coalition was necessary so that a number of radical measures could be carried out in order to halt the growth of the revolutionary movement in the country and to stabilise the domestic political situation. Lloyd George named the problem of the House of Lords, Home Rule for Ireland, national defence, foreign policy in general as being special issues of great urgency and importance. It would take years to resolve these problems, and during these years, according to Lloyd George, the country would have to be run by a coalition government.

Many of the ideas contained in the memorandum were undoubtedly produced by Lloyd George himself. It is certain, however, that a number of points in the document were originated by Churchill. The memorandum resulted from the joint efforts of both Liberal politicians. Many of the statements in it were formulated in such a way as to attract the Conservatives and to form the basis for an agreement with them.

Churchill and Lloyd George operated cautiously. They feared that these far-reaching proposals might discredit them in the eyes of their own party. But they were eventually compelled to inform several leading members of the Government of their plans. The reaction of some of them was positive, and more restrained in the case of others. The memorandum did not create a sensation.

At first, Churchill campaigned vigorously on behalf of the ideas presented in the memorandum. Soon, however, he observed that Lloyd George had no intention of including him in the government to be formed on a coalition basis. This

immediately dampened Churchill's ardour, and his fervent enthusiasm for the idea of a coalition immediately gave way to outright hostility. In the course of a stormy meeting between the two men, Lloyd George was obliged to placate his ally by offering him the post of Secretary of State for War in the future government. This move rekindled Churchill's enthusiasm for a coalition.

The formation of a coalition depended not only on the readiness of the Liberals to condone the idea, but also on the position adopted by the Conservatives. Balfour was not opposed to an alliance with the Liberals, but he was not supported in this by most of the other Conservative leaders. There were various reasons for this, but probably the main one was that the Conservatives then had no wish to play a part in any government that included Lloyd George, whom they regarded as being too "left-wing" and a danger to the interests of the aristocracy and Big Business. They had not yet come round to the view that the British ruling circles had much to gain from conducting their policy against the people under cover of the name of Lloyd George, who was himself a man of the people in origin. Several years later, the Conservatives were to see the advantages and then they did agree to collaborate with him. But, as matters stood in 1910, they rejected the prospect of a coalition with the Liberals and so scuttled the plan devised by Churchill and Lloyd George. This led to the breakdown of the constitutional conference, and the political truce between the two parties lapsed.

By the end of 1910 a great change had taken place in Churchill's convictions and interests. His brief and superficial interest in social reform had evaporated once and for all. The growing class struggle caused him to become increasingly irritated with the workers to whom he had, not so long before, offered the patronage and concern of the Liberals. Churchill was driven back by the course of events to an extremely reactionary standpoint in the country's political crisis.

This was the main reason underlying Churchill's wish to return to his old party by means of a coalition. This prospect, however, was denied him, in the immediate future at least, by the intractability of the Conservative leaders. Churchill was so upset that he debated with his friends whether to abandon politics and go into business. He calculated that, if he joined

forces with the banker Sir Ernest Cassel and worked with him for about four years, he could make a fortune. But these plans were probably not very serious. For Churchill, money was important, but his overriding passion was politics.

Profoundly embittered, Churchill thought it wise to spend a lengthy period away from London. He set off on a Mediterranean cruise with some friends in a yacht that one of them owned. It was an interesting and pleasant trip, but it gave little satisfaction to Churchill, who was constantly worried about what was happening in London.

Hitherto he had taken little interest in foreign policy. This was surprising, since the first decade of the twentieth century saw a great deal of activity by the British Government in the field of foreign policy. Now, however, Churchill developed a belated interest in such matters. In Constantinople he met the German Ambassador, Marshal von Bieberstein, and discussed with him the state of Anglo-German relations and the building of the Baghdad Railway. The conversation provides an indication of Churchill's naïveté and lack of experience in international affairs. He proposed to von Bieberstein that Britain and Germany should jointly supervise the railway, thereby ensuring the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

From the end of 1910 onwards, the idea of an impending war with Germany recurred more and more frequently in Churchill's speeches. His statements were now diametrically opposed to the public pronouncements he had made a couple of years earlier, before he had been censured by the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey.

Over the previous few years, Churchill had made a number of mistakes as a minister. Several of his proposals on major policy matters had had nothing to do with his own ministry and had been turned down by the Government. The persistence with which he put forward his own ideas irritated the other members of the Cabinet. He was capable of expatiating for hours at a time in the Prime Minister's presence without noticing Acquith's displeasure at the young minister's presumption. Churchill would often draft lengthy memoranda and distribute them to the members of the Cabinet so that they would study them and thus become familiar with his ideas. This assertiveness set other ministers against him: they were all much older than he was. On one occasion, when Churchill had regaled Grey with a lecture on

foreign policy, the Foreign Secretary commented: "Winston, very soon, will become incapable from sheer activity of mind, of being anything in a Cabinet but Prime Minister."

In the meantime, however, Churchill was forcefully carrying out his duties as Home Secretary. As a result, the working people of Britain began to realise that he was really no liberal and champion of social reform, but one of their most determined and tenacious enemies.

For a number of reasons, it had for decades been the practice in Britain for industrial conflicts to be settled by a compromise agreement. Both the bourgeoisie and the trade union leaders had an interest in seeing that disputes were resolved in just this way. During the first decade of the twentieth century, and particularly between 1905 and 1910, the spirit of compromise in the British working movement was steadily losing ground to bitter class conflict in which differences were settled through an all-out struggle, with both sides trying to win by any means. The strike movement was marked not just by an increase in the number of strikes and of working days lost through strike action, but also by the bitterness which the strikes generated. Employers were turning more and more to the police for help, so that strikes often gave rise to clashes between police and strikers.

As Home Secretary, Churchill was directly responsible for the use of force to crush industrial action. Many of his biographers agree that he displayed particular zeal in this area, and that the drastic measures he took were not, in many cases, warranted by the circumstances.

In November 1910 a dispute arose between the miners and mining companies in Wales. The workers had submitted a perfectly justified wage claim. The employers responded by dismissing them, and then began to bring in strike-breakers. When the workers attempted to make use of their picketing rights to keep the strike-breakers out, the police naturally gave the latter protection. Tempers flared, and fighting soon broke out. The police employed a degree of force that was totally unjustified by the need to maintain law and order. The workers were given a savage beating. Churchill had sent 1,000 London policemen into the strikebound area, and shortly afterwards he arranged with the Secretary for War for troops to be sent in as well. These actions initiated the

hostility towards Churchill on the part of the British working class that was subsequently to become increasingly acute.

Soon Churchill used rough police tactics against a women's demonstration, this time in London. On 18 November 1910 the Suffragettes held a meeting in one of the London halls and then set off for Parliament in order to hand a petition to the Prime Minister. They numbered no more than 300. The Houses of Parliament were ringed by about 1,200 policemen. The women's attempts to break through the police cordon led to a situation in which the police battered the women for several hours. The whole barbaric episode evoked profound resentment throughout the city.

When it was asked who was responsible, the women immediately pointed to Churchill. The accusation had a measure of justification. The police had never before used such methods on demonstrators. Usually Suffragettes who had tried to disrupt meetings were arrested and kept in custody for a few days. The women who took part in the London rally had supposed that their attempt to force their way into Parliament would simply lead to their spending the night in police stations. In the event, however, they were not arrested but were brutally manhandled. This change in police methods coincided with Churchill's arrival at the Home Office. The leaders of the Suffragette movement claimed that the instruction to use force on 18 November was issued by Churchill.

The zeal displayed by Churchill in his efforts to "maintain law and order" was again shown in the events that occurred in London in December 1910. The police happened upon some burglars who were trying to break into a jeweller's shop. The criminals opened fire, killing three policemen instantly and seriously wounding three others. They then went to earth. The incident created a sensation, since the British police did not carry firearms and their encounters with the underworld did not usually end in bloodshed. Churchill took charge of the investigation personally. Revolvers and rifles were issued to the police. Scotland Yard mounted a full-scale search. It was supposed that the crime had been committed by anarchists, and so, for Winston, it immediately took on political overtones.

On 3 January 1911 it was reported to Churchill that the killers had been spotted and surrounded at number 100, Sidney Street. The police declared that the criminals were

using firearms to resist arrest and were probably well supplied with ammunition. It was not known how many men were in the house. The neighbourhood was soon filled with hundreds of policemen and soldiers who had been drafted in on Churchill's orders. Artillery was even brought out from the Tower.

Churchill decided to take personal charge of the operation. He arrived on the scene wearing an overcoat with a fur collar and a silk topper. It all looked very funny against a background of police constables and soldiers exchanging desultory shots with besieged criminals. Churchill brought all his energy to bear on the situation, calling in reinforcements and discussing plans for a final assault on the house. The problem was that no one knew how many men had taken refuge there. Shortly afterwards the house caught fire, and the gang was obliged to retreat to the ground floor. Firemen were about to carry out their standing orders and to extinguish the flames, but the Home Secretary (who commanded both the police and the fire brigade) ordered them to let the house burn. When the house was completely burnt out, two charred bodies were found beneath the rubble. It turned out that the powerful police and military detachments, backed up by artillery and commanded by the Home Secretary himself, had been deployed against only two men.

Churchill's puerile behaviour during the operation, which the journalists christened "the siege of Sidney Street", was given broad coverage in the newspapers. His role in commanding the siege was brought out by numerous photographs. The French press, which also published many photographs, derided Churchill mercilessly. A primitive newsreel was already running in London at the time, and the cinemas showed Churchill commanding the operation. The audience booed and mocked the over-zealous minister, and he was referred to as "the Napoleon of Sidney Street". The Government did not like this kind of publicity, and the King remarked that personally taking part in a fight in the East End was incompatible with the responsibilities of a Cabinet minister.

When the truce with the Conservatives had come to an end, the Liberal Government returned to the question of the House of Lords. In November 1910 Asquith proposed to the King that Parliament should be dissolved and fresh elections

held. The situation was quite unusual. The Government was intending to hold a second general election in a single year. Moreover, Asquith required the King to promise that, if the Liberals remained in office after the elections, then he would comply with a Government request to appoint to the House of Lords as many new peers as it would take to create a Liberal majority there.

By that time a new King had acceded to the throne. The son of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, who had ruled for ten years, died in 1910. He was succeeded by George V.

Churchill disapproved of the Government's creating a difficult situation for an inexperienced King by asking him to appoint several hundred new peers. In this way, after all, many relatively undistinguished people would suddenly be placed on an equal footing with the titled aristocracy, which regarded itself as the salt of the earth. Nor was Churchill impressed by the fact that the King was being obliged to do something that he, the monarch, felt to be highly undesirable. The King's compliance with Asquith's demands would seriously undermine the prestige of the monarchy, which was not to Churchill's liking either. But he was in a difficult position and so did not object.

The King had no choice but to agree to Asquith's demand. But he asked that his consent should be kept secret for as long as possible and that it should be used by the Government only as a last resort.

December 1910 saw the second general election that year. It merely repeated the results of the January elections. The Liberals and Conservatives each held 272 seats in the new Parliament. Churchill was again successful in his Dundee constituency.

Since the Liberals could count on the Commons support of the Irish and Labour groups, Asquith's Government again stayed in office. The new Parliament was destined to remain in existence for a long time. The outbreak of war prevented the holding of elections at the proper term, and they did not take place until 1918.

The Parliamentary balance of power was such that the Conservatives could no longer resist the call to limit the powers of the House of Lords. The overall political situation in the country favoured the Liberals, and this, too, was an important factor. Consequently, in May 1911 the Liberals were able, for the third time, to steer through the Commons

a Bill limiting the rights of the Lords. The Upper House forfeited the right of veto in financial matters and retained the power to delay the adoption of legislation on all other questions for only two years.

In the meantime, the world had been sliding irrevocably towards a major war. In July 1911 the German Emperor, Wilhelm II, sent the gunboat *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir so as to demonstrate Germany's claims to territory in Africa. The move caused a sensation in Britain. The "leap of the *Panther*" afforded a momentary glimpse of the bitterness and full extent of the antagonisms between Britain and Germany, and it also clarified the foreign policy stance of several members of the Liberal Government. Churchill was anxious to find out what obligations the British Government had assumed in Europe. He was informed of them by Grey.

Many people, including the Germans, supposed that Lloyd George and Churchill did not support the aggressive Imperial foreign policy, and that they disagreed with Asquith, Grey, Haldane and several other members of the Government who were known as the "Imperialist Liberals". But it now emerged quite definitely that this was not so. In a speech, subsequently to become famous, that he delivered before City bankers, Lloyd George warned Germany that Britain would fight if the Germans forced her to. Churchill voiced his complete support for Lloyd George.

The German Government had not expected the radical section in the British Government to adopt such a position. The German Ambassador, Count Metternich, who had failed to detect this development in Lloyd George's opinions, was recalled from London. Churchill knew the Count well and dined with him on the eve of his departure. He told the Count that Germany should not fall victim to delusion and seek to compete with Britain on the high seas. As Home Secretary, Churchill took steps that would make German espionage and sabotage on British soil more difficult in the event of war. After the "leap of the *Panther*" he concluded that war with Germany was inevitable, and he devoted his attention and energy to preparations for it. All other matters came second.

However, in this same year 1911 he was also engaged in a war on the home front against the British working class, showing an increasing predilection for the use of force. Churchill's desire to teach the workers a lesson was gradually

causing him to throw even elementary caution to the winds. He failed to consider the obvious fact that using troops against the workers would inevitably create a gulf between the Liberal Party he represented and the working class. He was demolishing single-handed all the Liberal efforts to subject the working class to bourgeois influence. The course of the class struggle was then drawing the workers closer and closer towards the Labour Party, helping it to grow and extend its influence.

Churchill's actions came in for sharp criticism in Parliament. On 22 August 1911 the Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, commented: "If the Home Secretary had just a little more knowledge of how to handle masses of men in these critical times, if he had a somewhat better instinct of what civil liberty does mean, and if he had a somewhat better capacity to use the powers which he has got as Home Secretary, we should have had much less difficulty in the last four or five days." MacDonald was right. Churchill had a very poor idea of the balance of class forces in the country, and he often acted rashly.

The use of troops against the workers meant that Churchill the "liberal" politician and "social reformer" who had briefly courted the trade unions and the working class was a thing of the past.

Churchill's action during the period had two consequences. The working-class attitude towards him was hardening, and a mutual loathing was developing between him and the ordinary people. At the same time, the country's ruling circles were moving towards the view that Churchill was a reliable defender of their interests, a man who was capable of forceful action in difficult circumstances, and who possessed great will power, decisiveness and organising ability. As far as the people in high places were concerned, Churchill's standing undoubtedly rose, despite the extravagance of his actions and his excessive zeal. This was soon to have practical results.

Churchill was also giving more and more attention to matters of foreign policy. He spent a great deal of time studying Britain's relations with the countries of Europe. His visits to the Foreign Office were becoming very frequent and lengthy. Grey no longer withheld the true state of affairs from Churchill and Lloyd George.

Having obtained a fairly detailed picture of diplomatic

affairs, Churchill now turned to the War Office. Haldane, the Secretary for War, authorised his staff to acquaint Churchill with the state of Britain's war preparations. Churchill had particularly frequent meetings with General Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations. Using the ideas and information he had obtained from the military specialists, Churchill drafted a memorandum called "Military Aspects of the Continental Problem", which he submitted to the Prime Minister.

The document was a great success. It demonstrated that, although he possessed only the very modest military training given in a school for cavalry officers, he was able to provide a rapid and professional appraisal of a number of important military questions. Churchill managed to assemble the most interesting opinions and assessments produced by prominent military specialists, and then sift them through the filter of his own common sense. In the process, moreover, he displayed a good deal of imagination and shrewdness.

Churchill rejected all illusions over the direction in which international relations were developing, and became convinced that there was a solid basis underlying the much-repeated view that war with Germany was unavoidable. Declaring in his memorandum that the principal operations in the impending war would be carried out by the armies of France and Germany, he said that a British expeditionary corps of 13 divisions should be sent to France. Together with auxiliary units, it would comprise up to 300,000 men. In other words, he was now discarding his earlier argument that Britain would fight the next war mainly with the Royal Navy, and that the small British Army would inevitably founder among the massive armies of the continental powers. All this was an indication of Churchill's increased maturity as a politician.

But the memorandum also showed that neither Churchill nor those he consulted when writing it had the faintest idea of the true scale of the impending war. Clearly too, they underestimated the part that Russia was to play in the First World War.

Asquith circulated Churchill's memorandum to the members of the Imperial Defence Committee, which comprised the leading Government ministers and several military leaders. The Committee met on 23 August 1911 to

consider the strategic plans of the War Office and the Admiralty. The plan presented by General Henry Wilson was given a generally favourable hearing. Approval was given to the idea of despatching an expeditionary corps to France as soon as hostilities broke out. The Admiralty representative, Admiral Arthur Wilson, presented a highly unrealistic plan for waging a war against Germany. The admirals proposed to use the British Army merely as a commando force that the Navy would land on the German coast. This idea met with no support, and it was agreed that the Admiralty should draw up plans to transport an expeditionary force to France.

The meeting of the Imperial Defence Committee showed that naval preparations for the forthcoming war were going badly. It became apparent that Reginald McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had failed. Asquith began to wonder who should be sent to the Admiralty to tidy up the mess. Haldane was the most suitable candidate, but he did not get on at all well with the admirals, so that he would be in a very difficult position as soon as he set foot inside the Admiralty. Someone else was needed.

The decisive measures Churchill had taken against the working movement, his switch to an extreme imperialist position in matters of foreign policy (his official switch, that is, since he had always been an imperialist at heart), and the aptitude he had shown for military affairs prompted Asquith and other leading members of the Cabinet to consider Churchill for the post. At the end of September Asquith asked Churchill whether he would like to move to the Admiralty—a question that he had put to Churchill several years previously. But times and circumstances had now changed; the Admiralty had become very important and held out abundant opportunities for drive and initiative in the military sphere. Churchill accepted immediately. On 23 October 1911 McKenna took over the Home Office from Churchill and handed him the Admiralty.

It is quite possible that Churchill's willingness to transfer to the Admiralty was also due to the fact that his excessively firm, and sometimes purely adventurist, actions as Home Secretary were coming under fierce public attack. As Austen Chamberlain remarked, "Winston feels the Home Office is getting too hot for him and ... he has definite-

ly decided that he cannot rival Lloyd George as demagogue and will cultivate the rôle of statesman and strong man instead".

Churchill's move to the Admiralty concludes the period of his moulding as a statesman. His new assignment was to prepare the Royal Navy as quickly as possible for a war against Germany—a war that he thought might break out at any moment.

Chapter 5
The First World War

Churchill's appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty was wrongly interpreted by some leaders. Radical Liberals and pacifists in Britain imagined that he would act in sympathy with the views they cherished, since he had quite recently opposed any increase in Army and Navy expenditure, and had called for higher spending on social measures. Germany's leaders were also mistaken about Churchill. They recalled his recent speeches claiming that there was no antagonism between Britain and Germany, and that war between them was unlikely. Churchill's activities at the Admiralty immediately dispelled the illusions of some people and revealed the errors of others.

Churchill understood that he had been sent to the Admiralty for specific purposes. He later wrote: "I intended to prepare for an attack by Cermany as if it might come next day." There was an interval of 33 months between his Admiralty appointment and the beginning of the First World War. During these months Churchill was extremely active. In the Admiralty he created an atmosphere designed to convince Naval leaders of the danger of an impending German attack. Staff officers kept a round-the-clock watch, with orders to declare an immediate alert, if necessary. On Churchill's orders, an enormous chart of the North Sea was hung behind the desk in his office. Each day, a staff officer would stick flags into the chart, to show the location of German naval

vessels. The First Lord would start his working day with a detailed briefing on the naval deployment of the potential enemy. He had other sources of information on the German Navy, but he would study the enormous chart in order to instil into his assistants "a sense of ever-present danger".

Churchill did not yet have a very good grasp of naval matters. Consequently, as in other similar circumstances, he was primarily concerned to find knowledgeable advisers. He immediately thought of Admiral John Fisher, with whom he had once been on friendly terms before his opposition to increased naval expenditure. Churchill now managed to patch up their differences, and Admiral Fisher, returning from Italy where he had been living for a long time, became the new minister's unofficial adviser.

An energetic and active man, Churchill spent most of his time on board the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*. He toured all the most important naval bases, visited nearly all the large vessels and gained a thorough knowledge of the Navy's positions and needs.

Churchill no longer had the slightest doubt that war with Germany was imminent. He realised, therefore, that the Royal Navy had to be prepared so that it could quickly destroy the German Navy. The Germans did not immediately appreciate his position. In January 1912, when they had the idea of holding talks with Britain on naval armaments, they were willing to receive Churchill in Berlin for this purpose. Churchill, however, was not interested in the proposal. The British Government, too, probably concluded that a more balanced and mature politician should be sent to Berlin. Haldane, the Secretary for War, went instead.

The British Government may have wanted to reach an agreement with Germany limiting the naval development of both countries on terms acceptable to Britain. But Churchill was against the idea. Having made up his mind that war was in the offing, he was preparing for it. Indeed, some of his actions lead one to suppose that he wanted Haldane's mission to fail. During Haldane's trip to Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II announced in the Reichstag that there was to be a big increase in expenditure on the Army and Navy. "It is my constant duty and care," the Kaiser declared, "to maintain and to strengthen on land and water, the power of defence of the German people, which has no lack of young men fit to bear arms."

Churchill seized on this speech as providing an opportunity for him to air his views on the growing naval armaments race between Britain and Germany. Without consulting either the Prime Minister or the Cabinet, he delivered a highly controversial speech in Glasgow. He declared that Britain had never lacked sailors, since British children were brought up to love the sea and to be ready to serve in the Navy. After claiming that British naval power was exclusively defensive, Churchill attempted to draw a distinction between the British and German Navies: "The British Navy is to us a necessity and, from some points of view, the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury. Our naval power involves British existence. It is existence to us; it is expansion to them."

Churchill's statement that a navy was just a luxury for the Germans drew an outburst of indignation from Berlin. Germany's leaders realised that they had been very much mistaken when they had looked on Churchill's appointment to the Admiralty as a victory for the pro-German elements in Britain's ruling circles. Their mistake was understandable enough. In 1906 and 1909 Churchill had attended German Army manoeuvres as a personal guest of the Kaiser. He had met the German Crown Prince. Churchill had once belonged to the pacifist section of the Government and had made favourable comments about Germany. The Kaiser had been pleased to hear of Churchill's appointment to the Admiralty. It now transpired, however, that all the old ideas about Churchill's views had been totally wrong.

Churchill's speech caused annoyance in Britian too. The Government considered it precipitous and rash. The Conservatives were indignant and went around saying maliciously: "What can you expect from a fellow like that? " There were fears that Churchill's speech might endanger Haldane's negotiations with the Germans. But the German Government had no desire to reach an agreement in any case, so that Haldane's mission was foredoomed to failure.

Churchill had been sent to the Admiralty because the Navy was unprepared for the forthcoming war. It was considered that the new First Lord should give priority to forming a War Staff in the Admiralty comparable to the one already existing in the Army. Before doing this, Churchill had to replace a number of admirals occupying vital posts in the Navy Command. The First Sea Lord, Arthur Wilson, who

bore much of the responsibility for the Navy's unpreparedness, was dismissed, followed by a number of other admirals who could not toe the new line. Churchill showed great determination and will power as he removed the elderly and backward-looking admirals. John Fisher won the day.

There were many obstacles to be overcome in forming a Naval War Staff. Churchill wanted the Staff to be directly answerable to himself, but the admirals firmly resisted this idea. They took the view that a naval officer rather than a civilian should control a body that was to take exclusively military decisions. Haldane rallied to their support, and Fisher advised Churchill to agree that the admiral who was Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty should also be the head of the Naval Staff. Churchill had no wish to agree to this. This was the solution subsequently adopted, but only after Churchill had left the Admiralty.

The Naval War Staff did eventually take shape. It was part of its functions to draw up war plans and to promote candidates for the highest posts in the Navy Command.

Yet the new body failed to live up to the hopes that were being pinned on it, and its activities were not very beneficial. It suffered from a lack of traditions and officers trained for staff work.

Churchill, brimming over with self-confidence, adopted a scornful attitude towards his colleagues, and so got on badly with the admirals. This is hardly surprising: the admirals resented having to listen to a former junior cavalry officer who lectured them constantly on how best to command the Navy. They were particularly annoyed by Churchill's claims to deal with matters that were usually the province of the Admiralty Board. The Second Sea Lord, Admiral Jellicoe, said at the time that Churchill did not understand how limited he was as a purely civilian figure "quite ignorant of naval affairs". Jellicoe confessed that he admired the way Churchill presented the arguments for a proposal that he was to submit to the Cabinet or the Imperial Defence Committee. Not even the best barristers could compete with him in this field. But when he tried to handle military questions at the Admiralty in the same way, the situation became dangerous. Naval officers were not trained to excel in verbal argument, and so they found it difficult to communicate with the First Lord. Churchill did not listen to the opinions of his

colleagues and was impatient of their views unless they happened to coincide with his own.

Even Admiral Fisher, who was made First Sea Lord through Churchill's efforts, tended to share the admirals' view of the First Lord, despite his friendship with him. He was annoyed by Churchill's habit of writing numerous memoranda and making Admiralty leaders study them.

Churchill and Fisher brought about two major changes in the British Navy just before the First World War. They replaced the ships' 13.5-inch guns with 15-inch ones. There was no time to test and perfect the new idea, and uncommon determination was required to accept full responsibility for the negative effects that the introduction of heavier guns might have. Fortunately, the designers' calculation proved to be accurate, and the vessels that were equipped with the more powerful weaponry received no unpleasant surprises.

Churchill and Fisher then proceeded to switch the Navy over from coal to oil. The use of oil as a fuel was intended to ensure higher speed and mobility. It gave the British Navy great advantages. The only real question was where to obtain the new fuel. In Britain herself there was a surplus of coal, but there was not a drop of oil in the country. Churchill took steps to obtain oil from Iran. An Anglo-Iranian Oil company was set up, and, by paying a small sum to the Iranian Government, it secured a monopoly of all oil exploration, extraction and refining in Iran. The British Government was the major shareholder.

The steps that Churchill took undoubtedly heightened the military preparedness of the Royal Navy, and this was particularly important in view of the imminence of war. However, a high price had to be paid for all this, and so Churchill came into conflict with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George. At the end of 1913 Churchill presented Naval Estimates to the Cabinet calling for over £52 million. This was the highest Naval budget requirement in British history. Lloyd George came out categorically against it, and the Government had a difficult situation on its hands.

Churchill considered that the Navy's main strike force should be provided by heavy ships, which were also the most expensive, while Lloyd George had more faith in light cruisers and destroyers, which were cheaper to build. The argument with Lloyd George became so serious that both

ministers threatened resignation. It should be said that the threat to resign is a device that is quite frequently used in British politics. But the threat is usually no more than bluff. Such was the case here: neither Churchill nor Lloyd George was prepared to resign. In order to put pressure on his opponent, Churchill allowed a rumour to spread that, if he had to resign, his example would be followed by all the leaders of the Admiralty. Moreover, he let it be known that he was considering a return to the Conservative Party and hinted that he was ready to compromise with the Tories over Home Rule for Ireland. These threats were higly revealing. They showed that, in his heart of hearts, Churchill cherished the idea of rejoining the Conservatives. The Liberals had nothing to gain from these complications, and the controversy between Churchill and Lloyd George ultimately ended in compromise. Churchill lopped £1 million off his estimates, and Lloyd George gave his approval to naval expenditure totalling £51.5 million.

Even so, Churchill was drifting farther and farther away from Lloyd George, and it was not just a question of budgetary disputes. Churchill parted company once and for all with his short-lived enthusiasm for social matters. He no longer took any interest in them whatsoever. His mind was now fully taken up with military and foreign policy questions. Lloyd George, on the other hand, continued to devote unflagging attention to domestic political issues and class relations. In January 1913 he said of Churchill: "The truth is he is not a Liberal. He does not understand Liberal sentiment." The view that Churchill was not really a Liberal was shared by many prominent liberal leaders. This situation was potentially dangerous for Churchill, since it meant that in an emergency he could not count on the party's unconditional support. What was more, he was still on bad terms with the Conservatives. Needless to say, his naval policies made an impression on the Conservatives, as did his foreign policy statements, but they continued to regard him as unscrupulous, unreliable and politically dangerous. Their views were not without foundation. After all, before becoming First Lord, Churchill had opposed any increase in naval expenditure, but now that he could gain personal glory by reorganising the Navy, the Conservatives said, he was in favour of boosting the naval budget. One paper at the time referred to Churchill as a "boneless wonder", since he had a

propensity for effecting rapid changes in his political outlook.

The First Lord had to take steps to strengthen his political position. A deal with the Conservatives was then out of the question, and so he decided to reinforce his standing in the Liberal Party. For this purpose, Churchill took an active part in the struggle that broke out during the prewar years over the Irish question. Churchill's true sympathies lay clearly with the Conservatives, who were opposed to the granting of Home Rule to Ireland. However, he needed to draw closer to the radical elements in the Liberal Party and earn their favour once again, and so he gave his official backing to Home Rule.

The 1910 elections, which had given the Liberals and the Conservatives an equal number of seats in Parliament, made Asquith's government dependent on the votes of the Irish and Labour groups. But there was a price to be paid for Irish support, and in 1912 the Liberal Government made an attempt to introduce a limited form of Home Rule in Ireland. This course was also demanded by the revolutionary situation in Ireland, which threatened to cause grave complications for Britain that were particularly undesirable just before the outbreak of war. The House of Lords twice rejected the Home Rule Bill, and it was accepted only in 1914.

The Conservatives decided on the use of force to prevent the introduction of Home Rule. Relying on the landowners and the higher echelons of the bourgeoisie in Northern Ireland, they began in 1913 to set up armed detachments to prevent the extension of Home Rule to Ulster, the northern provinces of Ireland. Training was provided by commanders drawn from British Army and Naval officers. The detachments were armed with revolvers, rifles and even machine guns.

When, in March 1914, the Government ordered several military units to prepare for despatch to Ulster in order to quell organised resistance to the lawful authorities, should any be offered, 57 officers immediately tendered their resignations. Others intimated that they would do the same if the Government tried to use force against the insurgents in Ulster. It was, in effect, a Conservative-organised officers' mutiny against the Government. The Government preferred to back down.

Meanwhile Churchill was campaigning noisily for Home

Rule. He played an active part in steering Home Rule legislation through the Commons, and then proceeded to tour the country, speaking on behalf of Home Rule as he went. In February 1912 Churchill spoke in the Ulster capital of Belfast. The opponents of self-government prevented him from speaking in the hall originally designated, and so Churchill delivered his speech in the street before a large audience. Passions ran high, and those who opposed Home Rule threatened to harm the speaker. Ten thousand soldiers were sent in to maintain order at the meeting. It was said at the time that, if Churchill had not been accompanied by his wife, the Ulstermen would have thrown him into the river. Violent scenes were enacted in the House of Commons, with one of the MPs throwing a book at Churchill. The intervention of other Members prevented the two men from coming to blows.

Nevertheless, as one of Churchill's biographers comments, referring to both Winston and F.E. Smith, "one is driven to the conclusion that neither was emotionally involved in the affair but both were playing politics". By playing this game, Churchill did not regain his earlier reputation as a radical politician, but he did ensure that the Naval Estimates were sanctioned by the Commons without any serious opposition. As for Ireland the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 enabled the Government to postpone the implementation of the Home Rule Act. The Irish question was thus shelved until after the war.

At the beginning of the war Churchill's work at the Admiralty was beneficial. The Navy had been put onto a war footing. Admiral Fisher was convinced that the war would start in the second half of 1914, and Churchill probably shared this view. As a result, in 1914 the Royal Navy did not carry out its usual annual manoeuvres. Instead Churchill ordered a mobilisation exercise, during which both ships and crew were put on to an active service footing. The exercises took place in mid-July and ended with the traditional parade on 17-18 July. In normal circumstances the Fleet would have dispersed after the parade, and the vessels would have returned to their bases. But on 20 July the Admiralty announced that the First Fleet had been ordered not to disperse.

During the ten days that preceded Britain's entry into the war, the British Government examined the question of its

attitude towards the hostilities that had broken out. Churchill adopted a hard line calling for Britain's immediate participation in the war. He demanded instant mobilisation. Since several members of the Government were still hesitant, Churchill asked his friend F.E. Smith to sound out the Conservative leaders on whether they would be willing to join a coalition government if the Liberal Cabinet split on the war issue. When, on 1 August, Germany declared war on Russia, Churchill, acting on his personal responsibility and without sanction from the Cabinet, ordered the full mobilisation of the Fleet. In so doing, he probably wished to prompt the Government to declare war on Germany. It was a bold move, but such high-handedness might not have been to the Cabinet's liking. In the event, however, everything worked as planned. On the following day, the Government endorsed Churchill's mobilisation of the Fleet. On 4 August, 1914 Britain declared war on Germany.

"Nobody Wanted War" is the title of one of the sections in Lloyd George's war memoirs. "Amongst the rulers and statesmen ... not one of them wanted war." This, of course, is not true. Responsibility for the First World War, which was engendered by the contradictions of the capitalist system, must be borne, to one extent or another, by all the imperialist powers, including Britain. Admittedly, though, just before war broke out, the British Government was pursuing a rather cunning policy designed to remove any responsibility on its part for the outbreak of war.

Right up to the very outbreak of the war, British diplomacy preserved a mysterious secretiveness. The City-controlled Government was careful not to have it known that it intened to take part in the war on the side of the Entente, so as not to alarm the Government in Berlin and so put off the war. London wanted war, and so it acted in such a way as to make Berlin and Vienna build their hopes on British neutrality, while Paris and St. Petersburg were sure of Britain's intervention.

The war, which had been in the making for decades, broke out with direct and conscious provocation by Great Britain. The British Government reckoned on giving support to France and Russia only until they had exhausted its deadly enemy, Germany, and weakened themselves in the process. But the strength of the German military machine proved too formidable, and forced a real, and not merely an

apparent, intervention in the war by Britain. The role of the third party, which should by tradition have devolved upon Great Britain, actually went to the United States.

At the start of the First World War, Churchill appeared to have brilliant prospects before him. At the age of 39, he was a government minister of one of the Great Powers, he was in charge of the world's strongest navy, and his influence in the government and the country at large carried more weight than it ever had before. Prime Minister Asquith was well disposed towards him. All this seemed to indicate that Churchill would play a prominent part in the war against Germany. Churchill's enemies as well as his friends regarded him as one of the most likely successors to Asquith.

At the time, no one supposed that, just ten months later, Churchill would be dismissed from the Admiralty and, after a further five months, from the War Cabinet as well. It was not foreseen that he would lose his power and influence or that when, in 1917, Lloyd George became Prime Minister and brought Churchill back into government, his influence on Britain's political destiny would no longer be comparable with what it had been in 1914.

Churchill was an amazing combination of sound judgment, rational decision and imprudent action. This latter feature came particularly to the fore during the 18-months period that followed Britain's entry into the war.

In August 1914 Churchill had no idea of how serious and lengthy the war was to become. "Business as usual," was how he summed up the situation, meaning that, despite the war, the country should carry on with its normal way of life. It would be wrong to say that Churchill was alone in this delusion. All of Britain's leaders took the same view. Grey, for example, declared in the Commons on 3 August: "If we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer if we stand aside." British ministers assumed that the country would fight mainly with its Navy. The British Navy would defeat the German Fleet on the oceans and in the North Sea, and in the meantime Britain's continental allies would vanquish Germany on land. It would all be over in a few months, and maybe in just a few weeks. Everyday life in the country would, by and large, remain unaffected by the war.

As soon as hostilities broke out, Churchill longed for a decisive engagement with the German Fleet. However, the

Germans had no wish to give the British Navy the opportunity of sinking their weaker fleet with a single blow. The British managed to make a successful attack on a number of German vessels off the island of Sylt. One cruiser was sunk and several damaged, and a destroyer was also sunk.

The fleet managed to transport the British Expeditionary Force to France. There were no casualties during the Channel crossing. But the battle on the mainland was going against the Allies. The French Army was forced to yield a lot of ground with heavy losses. Kitchener, who had by then become Britain's Secretary of State for War, began to fear that the Germans might try to use zeppelins for raids on Britain. The British did have an Air Force of sorts at the time. It consisted of primitive aircraft, and they played an insignificant part in the war. The Army's Air Service was involved in the fighting on the continent. Churchill was responsible for the Royal Naval Air Service, which was still idle in the autumn of 1914. Kitchener suggested to Churchill that these aircraft should operate against the zeppelin bases. Since the aircraft of the period had a very limited flying range, Churchill set up naval air bases on the French coast, at Dunkirk and Calais. It was from here that the British made raids on the German hangars.

Churchill followed these operations carefully. When it became apparent that the British air bases were threatened by attacks from German patrols, Churchill organised the manufacture of armoured cars, equipped with machine guns, to defend them. It was soon found that the cars could not operate properly on terrain that was criss-crossed by trenches. He then had the idea of building a car that would carry its own portable bridge to cross trenches. Upon closer examination, the idea of an armoured car with its own bridge was scrapped, but not entirely. An Army major suggested that "land battleships" should be built. Churchill seized on the suggestion, set up an Admiralty committee to work on the project, and ordered the building of 18 experimental machines. Their cost would have amounted to £70,000. The Treasury refused to authorise this expenditure, but Churchill provided the necessary money from Admiralty funds. After Churchill had been dismissed, his successor ordered that only one experimental "land battleship" was to be built. This was the prototype of the tank.

September 1914 brought with it a growing danger that the Germans might capture the French Channel ports. The

French requested Kitchener to send a brigade of marines to Dunkirk as reinforcements. Kitchener consulted Churchill, and the First Lord readily consented. The marines were ferried across the Channel, and Churchill requisitioned transport for them in the shape of 50 London omnibuses. The British marines would drive along the front line and suffered no casualties, since they were not involved in any fighting. It was quite a funny sight, and it amused both the marines themselves and the soldiers who were in the area. Churchill spent a great deal of his time in France inspecting the naval air bases and the marines. His trips to the continent and the escapades of the marines formed what came to be known as the "Dunkirk Circus" or "Churchill's Circus".

The Conservatives began to criticise Churchill for gadding about France instead of spending more time at the Admiralty, where he was supposed to be, and for making himself a laughing-stock. His critics declared that armoured cars and London buses had nothing to do with the Navy. Churchill's Government colleagues also began to lose patience. The First Lord was sometimes absent from Cabinet meetings at which Admiralty matters were discussed. Prime Minister Asquith had on occasion to issue Admiralty instructions, since Churchill was in France.

The resentment was intensified by a speech Churchill made on 21 September 1914 in which he said that, since the German naval forces refused to leave port, they would "be dug out like rats in a hole". The British public did not take kindly to this statement. People in Britain realised that the Germans were a dangerous enemy and that, by insulting them, Churchill was tempting destiny. Three days later, a German submarine torpedoed three British cruisers off the Dutch coast. It was the first major success for the submarine, the new weapon that posed a serious challenge to Britain as a naval power. The British public regarded this as the Germans' reply to Churchill's speech of 21 September. He again found himself in an embarrassing situation. To make matters worse, it became known that the Naval authorities had considered it dangerous to keep the ships near the Dutch coast, but they had not been moved in time. Responsibility for their loss, involving the deaths of 1,500 officers and men, was laid at Churchill's door.

The First Lord was slow to learn from the war. Surprisingly for a man of great common sense, he made one

blunder after another. He was soon to cause a sensation through his actions at Antwerp. The German retreat from the Marne went hand in hand with their efforts to break through to the Channel coast. On 1 October, German units heading towards the coast reached the Belgian stronghold of Antwerp and penetrated the outer line of fortifications. The position could not be held for much longer. The British Government tried to convince the Belgians that they should not surrender the fortress before the arrival of reinforcements who would roll the enemy back from the walls of the city. On 2 October—in the absence of Asquith—Kitchener and Edward Grey gave their approval to Churchill's proposal to leave immediately for Antwerp so as to persuade the Belgians not to surrender the fortress. Churchill set off on the mission with all due haste and sent into Antwerp as reinforcements a brigade of marines that he transferred from Dunkirk. He then had a further two brigades of marines despatched from Britain; they were poorly equipped and even worse trained for battle.

Churchill managed to persuade the Belgians to continue the defence of Antwerp. But the fortress was doomed, and its rapid fall was inevitable. Failing to appreciate the gravity of the situation, Churchill personally took charge of the defence operations. He vigorously issued orders to the King of the Belgians, his ministers and the commanders of the land and naval forces that were in the fortress. Churchill firmly believed that he could hold the city if he were sent reinforcements. He despatched to Asquith a telegram which both amazed and amused the Prime Minister. Churchill requested Asquith to relieve him of his post as First Lord of the Admiralty and to accord him the necessary military rank that would enable him to officially take command of Antwerp. He assured the Prime Minister that the battle for Antwerp would then end in an Allied success.

On 5 October, Asquith noted in his diary that he had turned down Churchill's request, since he could not be spared from the Admiralty. "Winston is an ex-Lieutenant of Hussars," the Prime Minister recorded, "and would, if his proposal had been accepted, have been in command of two distinguished Major-Generals, not to mention Brigadiers, Colonels, etc." Churchill ignored the first rejection (he invariably refused to take no for an answer) and continued to insist on being appointed commander in Antwerp. "Winston

persists in remaining there," Asquith wrote on the following day.

Churchill was in luck. The Cabinet declined his request and demanded that he should return to London immediately so as to discharge his official duties. Field Marshal Kitchener had been inclined to agree to Churchill's wish. He had been willing to make Churchill a lieutenant-general so that he would be the most senior officer in Antwerp. What prompted Kitchener to take this decision remains in doubt. The elderly Field Marshal possessed a vast amount of military experience and must have realised that Churchill's plan was bound to fail. He may have simply wanted to give Churchill enough rope to hang himself with in Antwerp. The position there was such that Churchill's plan might lead to his falling in battle, being captured by the Germans or being interned in Holland.

Antwerp soon fell. Two battalions of reservists which Churchill had sent there among the marine brigades crossed the Dutch frontier by mistake and were interned in Holland. A total of 936 men were captured, 138 wounded and 57 killed.

Churchill's friends laughed at his adventures in Antwerp. His political adversaries, particularly the Conservatives, made use of the episode to launch fresh attacks on him. Andrew Bonar Law, his main Conservative enemy, wrote that the Antwerp expedition seemed to him to have been "an utterly stupid business" thought up by an "entirely unbalanced mind".

Churchill did not at the time understand that his plan had been wrong. Upon his return to England, he had a long conversation with Asquith. The Prime Minister was then well disposed towards Churchill, although he did not like Churchill's lengthy monologues lecturing and advising everybody, including the Prime Minister. This time, however, he listened to Churchill with great interest. Churchill became very confidential and asked that his future should not be viewed conventionally. Having tasted blood during the previous few days, Churchill declared that, like a tiger, he wished to devour even more. He asked Asquith to relieve him of his present post sooner or later, and the sooner the better, and to give him some kind of military command. Asquith replied that he could not be spared from the Admiralty. Churchill commented that there was nothing important that needed to be done in the naval field, since British supremacy at sea

would become greater every month. "His mouth waters at the thought of Kitchener's Armies," Asquith noted. "He ... declared that a political career was nothing to him in comparison with military glory."

This conversation shows that Churchill thirsted for glory and was prepared to take very risky steps in order to gain it. He was soon organising a fresh enterprise, this time one that was on a grander scale and so all the more costly to Britain.

As we have already seen, in 1911 Churchill had drafted a memorandum forecasting the development of the war on the Western Front. What actually did happen upset all his forecasts. He had assumed that the decisive battles would be fought during the first 40 days of the war. The months gradually passed, and still there was no decisive engagement. To the surprise of the British generals and, naturally, of Churchill, the war became protracted. Kitchener began to prepare for a three-year war, but, as events were later to show, he too was over-optimistic.

In October 1914 Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany. The Allies now had a further enemy to contend with, as well as a new front of military operations. On 2 January 1915 the Russian Commander-in-Chief, Grand Prince Nikolai Nikolayevich, requested British military leaders to take steps in the Middle East so as to distract the Turkish forces, which were pushing against the Russian armies in the Caucasus. The ensuing discussion in London led to a decision that was to have far-reaching consequences. At first, Kitchener was sceptical of Britain's ability to do anything to help. He wrote to Churchill that a show of strength near the Dardanelles during the next few months was probably the best that could be done. But Churchill had the idea that his Navy should fight its way through the Dardanelles and approach the Turkish capital of Constantinople. If necessary, it would then bombard the city and so force Turkey to abandon the war. From Churchill's numerous speeches and statements on the matter it can be concluded that the operation, as Churchill saw it, was intended not only to knock Turkey out of the war, but also to force Germany herself to ultimately sue for peace. The Sea of Marmora seemed to Churchill to be the place where the decisive victory in the First World War would be won, with himself cast in the leading role. He further considered that the assault

and capture of the straits could be accomplished by the Navy alone.

The Admiralty, and especially Fisher, were extremely doubtful about whether the Navy could manage on its own. The admirals took the view that the assault on the straits should be made by a combined force of ships and infantry, which would occupy both of the shores. Churchill was in no mood for delay and lengthy deliberation. On 3 January 1915, without consulting the admirals, he sent Admiral Carden, the commander of the Blockading Squadron at the Dardanelles, a telegram asking whether he thought it practicable to force the Dardanelles by ships alone. Churchill realised that there would be heavy losses, but, in order to forestall a negative reply from the admiral, he added that outdated battleships would be used for this purpose, and that the value of the results would justify the heavy losses. This was a clear hint to the admiral that a positive reply was expected. Moreover, Carden must have imagined that the ideas outlined in the telegram had been put together by the top Admiralty officials, and not just by the First Lord. Even so, Carden's reply was less than enthusiastic. He said that, in his view, it was impossible to simply charge through the Dardanelles, but the straits could be forced by means of lengthy operations calling for a large number of ships. This was quite enough for Churchill. He instructed the admiral to draw up a plan for an attack on the Dardanelles. The plan was received in London a week later.

On 13 January 1915 Churchill presented his plan at a meeting of the War Council, a special body set up to direct the war effort and consisting of a number of key ministers, generals and admirals. Apart from the Chancellor, Lloyd George, all the members of the Council approved of the First Lord's proposal. Admirals Fisher and Wilson, who were also present, remained silent throughout. A directive was issued, ordering the Admiralty to prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and capture the Gallipoli Peninsula, with Constantinople as its objective.

The lack of organisation and co-ordination between the military and naval leaders, and the immense confusion that was subsequently to attend the operation all stem from this meeting of the War Council. It later emerged from an investigation that neither Fisher nor Wilson had thought that any final decision was taken on 13 January. Fisher even

stated that he thought the Prime Minister had drafted the decision after the meeting had ended. But Asquith said that a draft of the decision had been read out during the meeting, and the admirals must have been out of the room at the time. The dispute provides very eloquent testimony to the situation in which the British Government took vital decisions. But this was not the end of the matter. About half the War Council left the meeting, convinced that the Admiralty had been instructed only to *prepare* for the operation, whereas the other members, and especially Churchill himself, considered that the conduct, and not just the preparation, of the operation had been sanctioned. The directive stated that the final goal of the operation was the seizure of Constantinople, but it was clearly impossible for the Navy alone to take the city. Land forces were also needed, but the decision made no mention of this. The omission was hardly surprising, since Kitchener did not at that time wish to make troops available for that purpose. It was, in fact, because he had not been asked to provide forces for the operation that he had not objected to it. Churchill had assured everyone that victory would be won by the Navy alone and that the Army would only come in to "reap the fruits". "So," wrote the official Australian historian of the war, "through a Churchill's excess of imagination, a laymen's ignorance of artillery and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born."

The admirals had no liking for the whole business. They did not see how the Navy alone, without Army support, could seize the straits, but Churchill managed to persuade them to carry out an exclusively naval operation. He assured them that the strength of the main fleet, deployed against Germany in the North Sea, would not be affected by the operation: it was to involve only outdated vessels that were unsuitable for use against the German Navy. Churchill assured his military assistants that, if, at any time, the operation looked like failing, it could be cancelled at a moment's notice. The admirals very reluctantly consented.

The absence of unanimity within the Admiralty was bound to have repercussions in the near future. Soon after 13 January, Admiral Fisher, the chief figure in the Admiralty after Churchill himself, lodged official objections to carrying out the operation without Army support. A further meeting of the War Council was held on 28 January, and it gave the

operation its approval. Fisher intended to register his protest by resigning, but Kitchener dissuaded him. Fisher stayed on at the Admiralty, and so the increasingly stubborn struggle between himself and Churchill continued. It was ultimately to lead to the departure of both of them from the Admiralty, but in January 1915 this was not a foreseeable turn of events.

Early in February, Churchill unexpectedly received powerful backing from Kitchener. Changing his earlier stance, the Secretary for War declared that the situation in France now made it possible to spare troops to support the naval attack on the straits after all. Admiral Fisher seized on this suggestion immediately and demanded that troops should be sent out as soon as possible. Kitchener agreed. On 24 February he informed the War Council that "if the Fleet did not get through, the Army would see the business through". As an expert on British policy in the Orient, he added that there must, on no account, be a British defeat, since this would do great damage to Britain's influence in the area.

After this, common sense would have seemed to require that the operation be carried out jointly by the Army and the Navy. But Churchill was impatient. He thirsted for public acclaim, preferably not shared with anyone else. Consequently, on 19 January, without waiting for the troops to arrive, the Navy embarked on an independent operation and started shelling the Turkish fortifications along the Dardanelles. The outer fortifications fell quite quickly, and the first ten days of the operation can be regarded as having been generally successful. Soon after, however, the naval advance was halted, for Turkish resistance proved unexpectedly stubborn. Kitchener's representative on the spot informed him that he doubted whether the Navy would be able to capture the straits without Army support, and that the admiral in command took too optimistic a view of his chances.

Supporters of the operation then took steps to bind the Government and stop it from curtailing the assault. On 19 February a leading article in *The Times* exaggerated the importance of the Dardanelles operation to victory in the war against Germany. The press evidently sought to create a climate of opinion that would not allow the Government to turn back.

A fresh offensive in the straits began on 18 March. The ships subjected the Turkish positions to heavy bombardment and almost silenced their guns. Victory seemed to be just

around the corner. But when the ships moved in for the kill, they suddenly found themselves in a minefield: three large vessels were sunk and four others put out of action. Nearly half the fleet assaulting the straits was lost in a few minutes. Four days later, the admiral in command of the operation said that it could not continue without Army backing. He was supported in this view by the general whom Kitchener had attached to the fleet. Churchill was annoyed by their conclusions, and he resolved to order the Navy to resume the operation. However, the senior officers at the Admiralty refused to sanction the order, thus putting an end to naval operations in the straits.

The idea of seizing the straits, however, was not abandoned. The mission now passed from the Navy to the Army. But this meant the failure of Churchill's plans to alter the course of the war in the Allies' favour by using the means that he had at his immediate disposal.

Five whole weeks went by from the cessation of the naval bombardment of the Turkish fortifications to the start of the operations carried out by land forces. The Turks made good use of this interval to strengthen the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Germans also guessed what the British intended to do, and did everything possible to assist the Turks. A German general, Liman von Sanders, commanded the Turkish forces and directed the efforts to fortify the peninsula; he had at his disposal a considerable number of German officers acting as instructors. The rocky terrain made the peninsula easy to defend and hard for the British troops to attack. If the assault operation had been properly planned and prepared, and if the naval and infantry attacks had been better co-ordinated, the British would probably have carried all before them.

On 25 April the British forces started their assault on the rocky peninsula, but failed to win a decisive victory. The situation was complicated by the appearance of German submarines in the theatre of operations. The British were forced to withdraw their new ships, and the Navy was gradually phased out of the assault. A series of attacks launched by British, French, Australian and New Zealand troops brought no major success and were attended by considerable losses. The futility of the operation became more and more apparent every day.

As Kitchener had warned, if the operation failed, there

would be unpalatable political repercussions for Britain in the Orient. Consequently, Army and Navy circles were in no hurry to admit defeat. The Admiralty witnessed a resumption of the struggle between those who favoured a fresh naval attack on the straits and those who wished to see the Army and Navy act jointly. Admiral Fisher stood firmly against any action by the Fleet until the Army had captured the coastal areas. Churchill favoured a limited operation in which the Navy would attempt to destroy the forts commanding the straits. He thought that such an operation might be successful, since the Turks were running seriously short of shells. Fisher opposed the venture. He was becoming increasingly worried by the danger from the German submarines that were stepping up their activities just off the shores of Britain. Fisher had information indicating that German submarines would soon appear in considerable numbers in the Mediterranean too. Churchill thought that the Navy should continue with the Dardanelles campaign, but Fisher was quite determined to bring to an end the Navy's part in the operation.

Admiral Fisher was almost twice as old as Churchill. He was very popular in the country, especially with the Conservatives. His personality was similar to Churchill's—decisive, bold and opposed to compromise. It was hardly surprising that eventually the two naval leaders clashed head-on. Churchill realised that Fisher's resignation would seriously undermine his own position. He had had to expend a great deal of effort on securing the old admiral's return to naval headquarters. For six months the wilful and obstinate Fisher had repeatedly threatened to resign, but Churchill had always managed to persuade him to stay on at the Admiralty.

The final parting of the ways came in mid-May 1915. On 14 May, despite the agreement that he do nothing of the kind without first consulting Fisher, Churchill ordered two more ships to be sent to the Dardanelles. Churchill knew that this might entail Fisher's resignation, but he decided to take the risk. On 15 May, Fisher resigned. This time, the Admiral was fully determined to see that Churchill was dismissed from the Admiralty. As usual, Churchill sent Fisher a lengthy letter in which he attempted to persuade him to continue their collaboration. "I hope you will come to see me tomorrow afternoon," he wrote. "I have a proposition to make to you, with the assent of the Prime Minister, which may remove

some of the anxieties and difficulties which you feel about the measures necessary to support the army at the Dardanelles." This elicited a flat rejection from Fisher: "You are bent on forcing the Dardanelles and nothing will turn you from it—nothing. I know you so well.... You will remain and I shall go—it is better so."

The Conservative press made use of the Dardanelles fiasco in order to bring Churchill into further disrepute. Churchill underestimated these attacks. He thought that it was just more run-of-the-mill Conservative criticism. Since he was very busy with the Dardanelles operation, Churchill had not paid due regard to the House of Commons, only putting in rare and brief appearances there. So he had not noticed that the situation in Parliament was going against him. Churchill was overtaken by disaster in 1915 because he displayed too much self-confidence and too little caution. He failed to attract the Liberals and had still not made his peace with the Conservatives.

Churchill remained unaware of the danger facing him. On the day Fisher resigned, he drew up a new list of members of the Admiralty Board, designating a successor to Fisher. Asquith approved his proposal.

In the meantime, the Conservatives had decided to use the clash between Fisher and Churchill in order to bring about the Minister's downfall. When he heard of Admiral Fisher's resignation, Bonar Law, who had by this time become the leader of the Conservatives, contacted Lloyd George and informed him that the Conservatives would withdraw their support from the Government unless Churchill were dismissed. It was hinted that the matter would be debated in the Commons, where the Conservatives would fight the Government on the issue. In view of the general situation in the country and the Parliamentary balance of power, such an eventuality boded ill for the Government. Lloyd George told Bonar Law that the only solution was to form a coalition. They both went to see Asquith together, and he agreed to the formation of a coalition government.

Churchill knew nothing of this. When he appeared in the Commons on the following day in order to announce the new composition of the Admiralty, Asquith and Lloyd George informed him that a coalition government was to be formed and that the Conservatives had made his dismissal from the Admiralty a condition of their participation in the govern-

ment. This was a terrible and unexpected blow. Beaverbrook and F.E. Smith, who visited Churchill at the Admiralty, found him in complete despair. Beaverbrook later wrote: "What a creature of strange moods he is—always at the top of the wheel of confidence or at the bottom of an intense depression."

In desperation, Churchill decided to swallow his pride. He knew that Bonar Law was his bitterest enemy among the Conservatives, yet on 17 May he nevertheless sent him a letter begging him to allow him to stay on at the Admiralty. The request was turned down. Asquith and Beaverbrook managed to negotiate for Churchill only the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, i.e. minister without portfolio, in the coalition government.

This was a sinecure—well paid and requiring no effort. Churchill was, in effect, deprived of power and denied the opportunity of influencing government decisions. Lloyd George wrote that, as a result of the formation of a coalition government, Churchill was flung from the masthead down to the lower deck to polish the brass.

What Churchill found most appalling was the fact that he no longer had any power to help in directing the war effort. He commented at the time to Lord Riddell: "I am finished." Riddell replied: "Not finished at forty, with your remarkable powers! " "Yes," he said. "Finished in respect of all I care for—the waging of war: the defeat of the Germans. I have had a high place offered to me—a position which has been occupied by many distinguished men, and which carried with it a high salary. But all that goes for nothing."

For a while, Churchill sat in the War Council, but his voice carried little weight there. Fisher did not return to the Admiralty either. Knowing that Churchill was being dismissed, he decided to demand dictatorial powers for himself there. The six conditions for his return that he presented to Asquith were unacceptable, and Asquith preferred to accept Fisher's resignation. Thus the two rivals—both Churchill and Fisher—departed from the scene.

Having lost his direct influence on the conduct of the war, Churchill nevertheless continued to campaign in favour of the completion of the Dardanelles operation. Warming to his theme, he claimed that there "lie some of the shortest paths to triumphant peace". But the Government knew that this was not so, and looked round for a means of extricating

itself from the mire into which it had been plunged largely thanks to Churchill's efforts. The generals were calling for evacuation. It was no longer a question of prestige, since there was no possibility of saving it. Everyone was now feverishly assessing the losses that would be sustained during an evacuation. In November 1915 the decision was finally taken to evacuate the Gallipoli Peninsula. Military leaders were amazed to find that the evacuation had not involved any serious losses.

For Churchill, far-reaching plans had depended on the Dardanelles operation. The American war historian Trumbull Higgins commented: "Like those of Kitchener, Churchill's initial motives for an offensive against Turkey included a strong desire for imperial gains." Through his concern for Britain's imperialist interests, Churchill had also hoped to eventually bring about a reconciliation with his old party—the Conservatives.

Churchill's desire to fight a comparably bloodless war had featured prominently in his plans. Through the Dardanelles campaign he had sought to draw a number of Balkan countries on to the side of Britain and to transfer on to their shoulders some of the burden of conducting military operations against Germany and her allies. Churchill saw it as being preferable for Britain to conduct a relatively limited operation against Turkey instead of fighting bloody battles on the Western Front. His strategy meant that, instead of Britain, someone else would have to throw masses of soldiers into the gigantic slaughterhouse of the Western Front, since the front existed and was active. Higgins comments that during the postwar period, when victory had already been won, in Britain "the price paid for such a victory is naturally criticized as too high, although it is rarely stated outright that it would have been better to have let some Ally carry a larger share of the butcher's bill". It was always a part of British policy to see that Britain's allies paid a larger part of the bill. It turned out that in the First World War, as also in the Second, it was Russia, an ally of Britain's in both wars, which paid more than any other country. British losses in the First World War were high, but could in no way be compared with those of Russia.

It is probably for this reason that Churchill and British historians of the First World War try, time and again, to convince everyone that the attack on the Dardanelles was

undertaken by Britain in order to ease the position of Russia. Higgins calls this an "ex-post-facto argument". Britain was in fact pursuing her own aims entirely. Since it needed Russia to provide soldiers for the war against Germany, the British Government promised in exchange to accomodate the imperialist designs that the Russian landowners and bourgeoisie had on the Straits. On 14 November 1914 Edward Grey promised the tsarist government that after the war Britain would hand Constantinople over to Russia. In March 1915 Britain and France officially declared that they were prepared to accede to Russian wishes on the subject. There is no doubt that the British Government had no intention of abiding by this promise.

As Churchill saw matters, Britain's seizure of the straits and Constantinople would enable the British Government to keep Russia out of the straits. Since the Greeks were also claiming that Constantinople was theirs, Churchill proposed to involve Greece in military operations against Turkey and, having thus brought Greece into conflict with Russia over the straits, to take possession of both the straits and Constantinople. On 5 March 1915 Churchill sent Edward Grey, the foreign Secretary, a letter suggesting that a double game should be played with Greece and Russia. Churchill was thus suggesting that the British Government's undertaking to the Russian Government should not be honoured. His proposal excluded the transfer of Constantinople to Russia, since, if Russia supported the involvement of Greece in operations against Turkey, then Constantinople would have to be handed over to the Greeks, and, if Russia opposed this, then Churchill would obstruct the transfer of Constantinople to Russia.

In the course of the unsuccessful operation to capture the Dardanelles, nearly 500,000 soldiers had been sent out. Of this total, 43,000 British officers and men had been killed, taken prisoner, posted as missing or died of disease.

It is traditional in Britain for special Royal Commissions to be set up to investigate major failures and mistakes made by the Government or any of its bodies. In 1916 Parliament set up a Commission to look into the Dardanelles campaign. The Commission adopted a strictly juridical approach towards assessing the actions of individual statesmen and military leaders. It found that the main responsibility for the operations's failure lay with the Prime Minister, the Secretary

for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty. The Commission determined that Churchill was not guilty of any improper conduct and that he had always acted in conjunction with his naval advisers, although sometimes their agreement had been reluctant. It was concluded that, although Churchill bore heavy responsibility for what had happened, it was also to be shared by Asquith and Kitchener.

The legalistic conclusions of the Commission of Enquiry were correct. However, Churchill's fellow MPs took the view that it was he who was primarily responsible for the Dardanelles campaign. If Churchill had not proposed the idea to the Government and had not used all his resources and powers in order to secure the agreement of the Government and the military and naval leaders to put it into effect, the operation would never have been attempted.

The moral and political stigma borne by Churchill following the failure of his strategy, which had entailed heavy losses in men and equipment, and had inflicted great damage on Britain's prestige, was a severe handicap and remained with him for a long time to come.

After the evacuation of Gallipoli there was no longer any justification for Churchill's continued presence in the War Council. The post that he occupied in the Government did not confer that right upon him. Consequently, when the War Council was reconstituted and became the War Committee, Churchill found himself beyond the pale. This meant that he had, in effect, become an inactive, if well-paid and highly-placed, official. Such a position was not to the liking of Churchill's dynamic nature. There was no hope of securing a government post that would enable him to take part in directing the war effort. The Conservatives stood firm in keeping Churchill out. He then took a decision that astonished many people.

Churchill resigned his position as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and went to France to serve as a major with the army in the field.

Lord Beaverbrook recalls how Major Churchill, an officer in the Oxfordshire Yeomanry, left for France on 18 November 1915: "The whole household was upside down while the soldier-statesman was buckling on his sword. Downstairs, Mr. 'Eddie' Marsh, his faithful secretary, was in tears.... Upstairs, Lady Randolph was in a state of despair at the idea of her brilliant son being relegated to the trenches.

Mrs. Churchill seemed to be the only person who remained calm, collected and efficient."

Churchill's departure for the front undoubtedly showed his strength of character. He could simply have stayed in London in his well-paid government post. But Churchill could not stand idly by. What was more, he needed an outlet for the seething resentment that he felt over his dismissal (wrongful, as he saw it) from the Admiralty. It would be inaccurate to see Churchill's departure for the front as a direct expression of patriotism. One of his most favourable biographers writes: "He got ready for the trenches inspired by a determination to gain new laurels in a military career now that politics seemed closed to him."

As might have been expected, Churchill made advance preparations for his departure to the Army. General John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Corps in France, was a close friend of his, and Churchill hoped for his assistance.

When Churchill disembarked at the French port of Boulogne, the Commander-in-Chief's personal car was waiting for him. French gave Churchill a warm reception, laid on an excellent dinner and treated him as though he were still a member of the War Council. On the following day, French asked Churchill what he would like to do in the Army. "Whatever I am told," he replied. French proposed to put Churchill in charge of a brigade. This meant that Churchill would be given the rank of brigadier-general and would command a formation of up to 4,000 men. Churchill readily accepted the offer. Since, however, he had no experience of military service in First World War conditions, he rightly considered that he ought to spend at least a month in forward positions in a more modest capacity so as to gain some experience of active service. He suggested that the Guards Division would be the most suitable for the purpose. His request was granted.

The army in the field looked on politicians very coolly, and so the Guards were not terribly enthusiastic about having a former minister foisted upon them. The colonel in charge of the unit to which Churchill had been assigned greeted him coldly and said: "I think I ought to tell you we were not at all consulted in the matter of your coming to join us." His position was complicated by the fact that the bulk of all army officers were very Conservative in outlook and regarded

him as a Liberal. This increased their antipathy towards the new major.

Churchill realised that he needed to show his mettle immediately. He therefore did everything possible to establish normal relations with his fellow officers. His buoyant personality, ready wit, irrepressible energy and also his uncommon personal courage soon helped him to make the necessary contact with his companions. The officers and men took a great interest in Churchill: he had, after all, been a popular and well-known figure in Britain before rejoining the Army. On one occasion it was a senior officer's curiosity that saved his life. Churchill received an order to present himself to the Corps Commander. He was told that, at a crossroads some three miles from where the battalion was currently stationed, he would find a car waiting to take him to the Corps's headquarters. After wading through the mud and finally reaching the spot indicated, Churchill found no car there at all. It was only an hour later that a liaison officer appeared and told him that the car had been sent by mistake to a different place, that it was now too late to see the general anyway and that the matter was not, in any case, important, since the officer in question had simply wished to have a chat and take a good look at him. Churchill was incensed, and his indignation grew as he again struggled through the mud towards the forward positions. There, however, he was greeted by the news that he bore a charmed life. It turned out that, shortly after his departure, a German shell had scored a direct hit on the dug-out which Churchill usually manned, and completely demolished it. Churchill's luck had thus held once again.

Churchill had many enemies in London. They found out that French intended to give the former minister command of a brigade. Conservative MPs put on a show of righteous indignation over the fact that such a high position should be offered to him through patronage and owing to the elevated post that he had held earlier. Commissions in the British Army were, at the time at least, conferred mainly on the scions of artistocratic and wealthy families. The Conservatives had always defended these privileges, but in this particular case they began to attack Churchill from a "democratic" standpoint.

On 16 December 1915 the Conservative MP for Bath, Major Sir C. Hunter, asked the Under-Secretary of State for

War whether Major Winston Churchill had been promised the command of an infantry brigade; whether this officer had ever commanded a battalion of infantry, and for how many weeks he had served at the front as an infantry officer. The Under-Secretary replied, with some irony: "I have no knowledge myself ... of a promise of command of an infantry brigade having been made to my right honourable and gallant Friend referred to in the question. On the second point I have consulted books of reference and other authentic sources of information, and the result of my investigations is that my right honourable and gallant Friend has never commanded a battalion of infantry. No report has been made to the War Office of the movements of Major the Right Honourable Winston L.S. Churchill since he proceeded to France on 19 November. If he has been serving as an infantry officer between that date and today the answer to the last part of the question would be about four weeks." The House greeted this reply with a certain amount of mirth. The Under-Secretary had probably sought just such a response, otherwise he would have phrased his answer differently. Backed up by continued jeering, Hunter asked whether or not Churchill had been promised the command of an infantry battalion. Other Members responded with shouts of "Why not? " Another MP then declared to the Under-Secretary for War: "Is the right honourable Gentleman aware that if this appointment were made it would be thought by many persons inside the House and outside to be a grave scandal? "

These Commons attacks on Churchill reflected more than a Conservative wish to make fun of him once again. The Conservatives sought to frustrate his appointment to any significant military post. Asquith, who had been much embarrassed by Churchill's failure over the Dardanelles operation, did not want another Churchill scandal on his hands. Consequently, when General French informed the Prime Minister that he intended to put Churchill in command of a brigade, Asquith rejected the idea categorically. He demanded that French should not give Churchill anything higher than the command of a battalion. The General was most upset, since he could not keep his promise to Churchill. But in the circumstances French was powerless to do anything. The War Cabinet was dissatisfied with the Commander-in-Chief, his days in that position were numbered, and he was perfectly well aware of this. He told

Churchill at the time: "I am, as it were, riding at single anchor." This was indeed the case: less than a month later, French was replaced by General Douglas Haig. French asked Haig to give Churchill a brigade, but this request was flatly rejected. Haig said that, if Churchill wanted to be a soldier, he must ascend the military ladder rung by rung. Churchill had to be content with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Instead of a brigade, he was given an infantry battalion.

Asquith and Haig had finally frustrated Churchill's ambitious designs. The command of an infantry battalion was not likely to provide the glory that he sought. Churchill had put himself into the trap, and Asquith had simply snapped it shut. He now had two possibilities open to him: either to slog away as an ordinary army officer, which might lead to his being wounded or killed by a German bullet, or to give up army service altogether and to make use of his contacts and position as an MP once again in order to return to Britain and engage in politics. The second possibility would be a very awkward one, given the ostentatious nature of his original departure for the front. It is easy to imagine Churchill's hatred of Asquith growing day by day as he sat in the muddy frontline trenches of France in the cold of the late autumn of 1915.

The unit of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers to which Churchill was sent gave him a reception that was just as unfriendly as the one he had received a month before from the 2nd Grenadier Guards. The Army really did have no liking at all for "these damned politicians". But Churchill soon settled in. The day after his arrival, he assembled his subordinates and announced: "War is declared, gentlemen, on the lice! " He then delivered a detailed lecture on the role of lice in earlier wars and on the means of dealing with them. The lecture went down well, but what went down even better was the informal way in which this famous descendant of the Duke of Marlborough treated ordinary Scottish captains. The junior officers set to work with a will, wielding their brushes and hot irons against the new foe.

Churchill demonstrated his inexhaustible energy, courage and scorn of danger before his officers and men.

His restless nature soon made its presence felt in the trenches. At night he would often give the order to open fire along his sector of the front. The Germans feared that this was the preliminary to yet another sortie, and so returned the

fire. Prolonged artillery exchanges would then ensue. This annoyed the neighbouring battalions, since it needlessly increased the tension on the officers and men, and prevented them from getting any rest. All this activity was not terribly to the liking of Churchill's own battalion either.

Although it was very awkward to leave the Army and return to London, Churchill nevertheless decided to abandon the front. He knew that his enemies would abuse him and would try to use this move in order to further undermine his authority by publicising his retreat from active service. In March 1916, having spent a total of some four months at the front, Churchill wrote to his friend Lord Beaverbrook, saying that he was considering a curtailment of his military service and a return to Britain. He added that the war was being improperly conducted by the British Government and that he wished to help to put matters right. Churchill regarded this as a perfectly convincing reason for leaving the front. "Other men did not succeed in getting away from the front so easily," Emrys Hughes comments. "They, too, might have thought they could use their brains and genius at home—but they were not Winston Churchills."

Churchill succeeded where many others would have failed. In March 1916 he went to London on leave in order to take part in Parliamentary debates and to speak on the Naval Estimates. He delivered a long policy speech, behaving as though he were a member of the Government rather than an infantry officer. He instructed the Prime Minister on how to reorganise the Admiralty and pursue the rest of the war. By speaking in this way, Churchill was unequivocally hinting that the Government should bring him back from the front and give him a responsible post connected with the conduct of the war. This was certainly the view taken by most MPs. "It was a bid for the leadership" and "It was an attempt to get back into the Cabinet," they said, and their comments were reported by the British press.

There was mounting dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Asquith among the establishment, and his enemies entered into subtle intrigues to unseat him. The plotters were aware of Churchill's outstanding ability in polemics and public speaking, not to mention his antipathy towards the Prime Minister, and so they were quite keen to involve him in the struggle against Asquith. Some of them wrote to Churchill in France suggesting that he should give up his military service,

return to the Commons and take part in the growing opposition against Asquith. Admittedly, the bulk of the opposition did not make such overtures to him. Biographers mention only two second-echelon politicians—Sir Edward Carson and Sir Arthur Markham—and one prominent journalist—C.P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*—who supported Churchill's idea of returning to politics. Even so, that was enough for him to make his final decision.

Churchill asked the Secretary for War to discharge him from the Army. The minister thus faced a dilemma: if he complied with Churchill's request, he might be accused of patronage, while, if the request were declined, it might be said that he feared the critical comments on the War Office and the Government that Churchill might make in the House of Commons. In the end, the War Office allowed Churchill to retire from the Army, but on the condition that he would never again ask to serve in the Army. Churchill found no difficulty in complying with this condition: he had had enough of military service. In June 1916 he finally returned to London.

Churchill was anxious to make a political come-back. Above all, he needed to refurbish his reputation so as to have some chance of returning to government. This meant in practice that he had to convince the public that he was not responsible for the Gallipoli tragedy and that it had been a reasonable enough operation that had failed through no fault of Churchill's. This was a tricky case to argue. Firstly, since Churchill *was* largely responsible for the tragedy, it was extremely difficult to prove the opposite. Secondly, Churchill could only justify himself by shifting the blame on to others. He now loathed Asquith so much that he was prepared to lay at his door the greatest possible responsibility for the unsuccessful campaign. Asquith was fully aware that, in justifying himself, Churchill would demolish his (Asquith's) reputation and that of General Kitchener. Consequently, the Prime Minister categorically refused Churchill permission to make public the dossier he had prepared on the Dardanelles operation. This refusal was justified by saying that military secrets could not be divulged in wartime. But Churchill was not deterred that easily. Asquith was forced to promise that a Royal Commission would be set up to investigate all the events that were connected with the Dardanelles operation, and this was duly done.

The general situation was not propitious towards Churchill's return to power. Public opinion was against him and the Conservatives remained hostile. These feelings were reflected by British newspapers, which spoke out against Churchill's being allowed to take part in dealing with affairs of state. Churchill's more favourable biographers write sympathetically of how he found comfort in family life and painting during this difficult period. By 1916 Churchill already had three children: his daugher Diana, aged seven, his son Randolph, aged five, and his two-year-old daughter Sarah. His wife, Clementine, always gave Winston unfailing support in difficult times. She made great efforts to distract her husband from gloomy contemplation of his political misfortunes. She was always calm and gay, confident—at least, outwardly—that everything would turn out right in the end, and she tried to instil this confidence into Winston, who was sometimes inclined towards pessimism and melancholy. Clementine did all she could to sustain his new interest in painting, and did her best to see that the house was visited by many interesting people.

During one of these difficult days, Lord Riddell asked Churchill what his plans were. "Earn my living and go on painting," Churchill replied. "Painting has been a great solace. It helped me to tide over the horrible time after the Admiralty."

It is significant that Churchill sought consolation in his family and in painting. He thought neither of returning to the front nor of engaging in some other patriotic endeavour that would have been in keeping with the rigours of wartime. Not every disgruntled lieutenant-colonel of infantry in retirement could have spent his time so comfortably in a war setting.

Churchill showed considerable talent in his paintings, probably inherited from his mother. It is said that he turned to painting by chance, after his dismissal from the Admiralty. A group of officers in the armoured car division that Churchill had once set up wished to express their sympathy and so commissioned the well-known artist John Lavery to paint his portrait. While he was posing, Churchill developed an interest in the artist's work and soon became a diligent pupil of his. After a short time, he became thoroughly engrossed in painting. He would spend the summer out of town, on a country estate, where he would don a knee-length cream-coloured smock and would often sit in the garden

drawing landscapes. Whenever he was invited out, he would arrive with his easel. He would tell his hosts that he could not draw and talk at the same time, and would then take out of a box a hefty screed justifying the action he had taken over the Dardanelles operation. Instead of talking to their visitor, the hosts had to be satisfied with reading his account.

By the end of 1916 the intrigues that aimed to unseat Asquith and make Lloyd George Prime Minister assumed a more active form. Apart from the candidate for the premiership, Beaverbrook also featured prominently in these schemes. A great deal depended on the position adopted by the Conservative leader, Bonar Law. Beaverbrook was Bonar Law's closest friend, and he was able to convince him that it was necessary to replace Asquith with Lloyd George. Asquith was caught in a cleverly arranged trap. Lloyd George presented him with an ultimatum demanding that direction of the war effort should be transferred from the Prime Minister to Cabinet control. As expected, Asquith refused, and Lloyd George tendered his resignation. This undermined Asquith's position, and he himself was obliged to resign. In accordance with tradition, the King instructed the leader of the second party in the coalition, the Conservative Bonar Law, to form a new government. As had been planned by the plotters, Bonar Law declined this invitation and advised the King to entrust the formation of a government to Lloyd George.

In December 1916 Lloyd George formed his coalition government. The new Prime Minister was on quite good terms with Churchill, and he was prepared to offer him a government post. But the Conservatives were adamant in their opposition to the idea. Bonar Law said that he would refuse to have anything to do with a government that included Churchill. The combined efforts of Lloyd George and Beaverbrook notwithstanding, Bonar Law refused to budge from his stubborn opposition, and so Churchill was excluded once again.

Lloyd George knew Churchill well. Consequently, it is particularly interesting to read the description of his friend that is included in his recollections of the formation of the government at the end of 1916: "The third ex-Minister who would have been helpful in council was Mr. Churchill—one of the most remarkable and puzzling enigmas of his time. When I took office he had ceased to be a Minister for some months,

but he was still a prominent member of the Liberal Party. His fertile mind, his undoubted courage, his untiring industry, and his thorough study of the art of war would have made him a useful member of the War Cabinet. Here his more erratic impulses could have been kept under control and his judgment supervised and checked before plunging into action. Men of his ardent temperament and powerful mentality need exceptionally strong brakes. Unfortunately, the Tory Ministers, with the exception of Mr. Balfour and Sir Edward Carson, were unanimous in their resolve that he should not be a member of the Ministry, and most of them made it a condition precedent to their entry into the Government that he should be excluded.

"Mr. Bonar Law had a profound distrust of him. I did my best to persuade him to withdraw his objection and I argued the argument which is usually advanced on these occasions,—that Mr. Churchill would be more dangerous as a critic than as a member of the Government. ...When I put it in this way to Mr. Bonar Law, his reply was: 'I would rather have him against us every time.'

"I deeply regretted this attitude," Lloyd George continues, "but I could not risk a break-up of the political combination which was an essential foundation of the Government, for the sake of any immediate inclusion of Mr. Churchill in the Ministry."

Churchill, however, was absolutely sure that he would be given an official post. Having heard from Beaverbrook during a dinner given by F. E. Smith that "the new Government will be very well disposed towards you. All your friends will be there" (but Churchill himself would not), he was so upset that he grabbed hold of his hat and coat, and immediately walked out. Churchill had no idea of the difficulties that the new Prime Minister had faced as soon as Churchill had been proposed as a potential minister. The political situation in the country at that time was such that Churchill's influential friends Lloyd George and Beaverbrook were unable to do anything for him. Lloyd George promised to help Churchill at the earliest opportunity, and he was as good as his word.

In July 1917 Lloyd George felt himself in a sufficiently strong position to include Churchill in the Government. Even so, he did not offer him a Cabinet post, but only the portfolio of the Minister of Munitions. Lloyd George was unable to give him anything more, since the Conservatives

had been most unhappy about even that appointment.

The new post did not enable Churchill to help in conducting the war or to influence Government policy. Nevertheless, his appointment gave rise to a great outcry both inside and outside Parliament. By then, the Royal Commission that had investigated the Dardanelles operation had published its findings. If Lloyd George had not replaced Asquith as Prime Minister, the Commission's report would not have been published for a long time. As he wished to give Churchill some support, Lloyd George made the report public. Since the Commission had not so much exonerated Churchill as stated that responsibility for the Dardanelles tragedy did not rest with him alone, but also with Asquith and Kitchener, its report did nothing to calm public feeling against Churchill. As a result, such prominent figures as Admiral Beresford declared in public: "The P.M. had no right to make such appointments in opposition to public opinion." The Conservative press published letters which said: "We cannot forget that his name is associated with disaster." There were scenes in Parliament during which MPs claimed that Churchill's appointment was "a national danger".

But matters did not stop there. Lloyd George began to receive angry letters from members of the Cabinet, and the Government seemed to be in danger of disintegration. In his memoirs Lloyd George gave an account of the difficulties that he had to contend with as a result of Churchill's appointment. "I was able to appoint him to the headship of the Ministry of Munitions," he wrote. "Even then the Tory antipathy to him was so great that for a short while the very existence of the Government was in jeopardy.

"Why were they so bitter and implacable? His political record naturally exasperated his old Party. He does nothing by halves, and when he left it he attacked his old associates and condemned his old principles with a vigour and a witty scorn which rankled. When war was declared the national peril constrained all Parties into a temporary truce in which party ranks and party rancours were for the time being overlooked or ignored. But Conservatives could not forgive nor forget Churchill's desertion to their enemies, and his brisk and deadly firing into their ranks at a moment when their rout had begun.... His mistakes gave resentful Tories an irresistible opportunity for punishing rank treason to their Party, and the lash which drove Churchill out of office,

although knotted with the insults he had hurled at them, was wielded with the appearance of being applied not by vindictive partisans but by dutiful patriots."

Referring to his colleagues who were disturbed by Churchill's appointment, Lloyd George went on to say: "They admitted he was a man of dazzling talents, that he possessed a forceful and a fascinating personality. They recognized his courage and that he was an indefatigable worker. But they asked why, in spite of that, although he had more admirers, he had fewer followers than any prominent public man in Britain? They pointed to the fact that at the lowest ebb of their fortunes, Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham and Campbell-Bannerman in Scotland could count on a territorial loyalty which was unshakable in its devotion. On the other hand, Churchill had never attracted, he had certainly never retained, the affection of any section, province or town. His changes of Party were not entirely responsible for this. Some of the greatest figures in British political life had ended in a different Party from that in which they commenced their political career. That was therefore not an adequate explanation of his position in public confidence. They asked: What, then, was the reason?

"Here was their explanation.. His mind was a powerful machine, but there lay hidden in its material or its make-up some obscure defect which prevented it from always running true. They could not tell what it was. When the mechanism went wrong, its very power made the action disastrous, not only to himself but to the causes in which he was engaged and the men with whom he was co-operating. That was why the latter were nervous in his partnership. He had in their opinion revealed some tragic flaw in the metal. This was urged by Churchill's critics as a reason for not utilising his great abilities at this juncture. They thought of him not as a contribution to the common stock of activities and ideas in the hour of danger, but as a further danger to be guarded against.

"I took a different view of his possibilities. I felt that his resourceful mind and his tireless energy would be invaluable under supervision. That he had vision and imagination, no one could doubt. The Dardanelles idea (apart from its execution), and his early discernment of the value of tanks clearly demonstrated his possession of these faculties. Men

with such gifts are rare—very rare. In an emergency they ought to be utilised to the full, and if you keep a vigilant eye on their activities, they are a greater asset than a legion of the conventional sort.

"That is why I thought he ought to be employed. I knew something of the feeling against him amongst his old Conservative friends, and that I would run great risks in promoting Churchill to any position in the Ministry; but the insensate fury they displayed when later on the rumour of my intention reached their ears surpassed all my apprehensions, and for some days it swelled to the dimensions of a grave ministerial crisis which threatened the life of the Government. I took the risk, and although I had occasionally some reason to regret my trust, I am convinced I was right to overrule the misgivings of my colleagues, for Mr. Churchill rendered conspicuous service in further increasing the output of munitions when an overwhelming supply was essential to victory. As to Churchill's future," Lloyd George concluded, "it will depend on whether he can establish a reputation for prudence without losing audacity."

Needless to say, the Ministry of Munitions, which was with such great difficulty entrusted to Churchill, was not what he had been dreaming of. But he had no choice in the matter, and so he accepted the appointment. His typical comment was: "Not allowed to make the plans, I was set to make the weapons."

Churchill was unable to confine himself to the matters actually entrusted to him or to force himself to stop making plans. He forwarded proposals to the War Cabinet to the effect that the Government should discontinue the military operations on the Western Front, since they were being pursued at such high cost, and should concentrate on operations in other areas. There were people in the Government who sympathised with the idea, but Britain was not waging the war alone, but in concert with her allies, and so had to reckon with the opinion of France. Although a great deal was being done by the British Government to develop far-reaching military operations against Turkey in the Middle East, the British Army remained, nevertheless, in France and sustained its share of the casualties.

While Churchill was still at the Admiralty, he had busied himself with the idea of building an armoured vehicle that would be capable of crossing trenches. The prototype of the

tank had thus already been built in Britain. Now that Churchill had seen with his own eyes how the war was being fought in France, he was again seized by the idea of striking a mechanised blow against the enemy involving the use of tanks. It annoyed Churchill that the generals took such a sceptical view of new equipment and did not wish to wait until a sufficient quantity of the vehicles had been built so that they could be used to launch a vast offensive. Churchill saw that there was no time to be lost—the Germans might realise the importance of the new weapon and so develop counter-measures. He need not have worried: the German generals, like their British counterparts, were at first sceptical about the tank.

On 20 November 1917 tanks were first used in large numbers in an Allied offensive against German positions on the Western Front. They proved to be a great success. After this, the British Government took measures to step up the production of tanks and to train men for the tank corps. Churchill had done a great deal to create the new weapon. Books sometimes refer to him as "the father of the tank". When a number of people claimed that it was they who had invented the tank, the Royal Commission set up to investigate the matter had the following to say in its conclusion: "In the first place the commission desire to record their view that it was primarily due to the receptivity, courage and driving force of the Rt. Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill that the general idea of the use of such an instrument of warfare as the tank was converted into a practical shape." Both then and later, Churchill took a great interest in military hardware and in all innovations in the field.

The Ministry of Munitions was an enormous organisation employing about 12,000 officials. Churchill's biographers have praised his reorganisation of the military, his reduction in the number of different departments and his injection of drive and efficiency into the whole institution.

The ministry controlled the working of a vast number of industrial enterprises that were manufacturing field guns and the shells they used, as well as tanks and various other kinds of military hardware, including transport vehicles and aircraft. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, Churchill's ministry helped to equip the American divisions that arrived in Europe. Medium-calibre field guns with total

value of £100 million were manufactured in Britain for the American forces.

The relationship between the employers and the working class did not come within Churchill's province. Lloyd George was fully aware of the significance of the matter in wartime and dealt with it himself. The Prime Minister knew that Churchill recognised only one way of handling the issue—through force—but resorting to force might have disastrous consequences in view of the state of affairs in Britain at the time.

Nevertheless, Churchill was not entirely divorced from the disputes that arose at the munitions works. As one of his biographers tells us, "when labour troubles threatened to affect the efficiency of his immense supply machine Winston adopted a strong line. Faced with a series of strikes he secured the backing of Lloyd George and threatened that the immunity of the strikes from military service would be withdrawn unless they returned to work, and he announced that the ringleaders would be prosecuted with the full rigour of the law".

The Ministry of Munitions set up branches in France. This was extremely important to Churchill, since he thus had official cause to travel to the Continent at any time and to see how matters were progressing at the front. He made more and more frequent use of this opportunity and would often visit the headquarters of the British commander of the expeditionary force. These trips enabled him to indulge his passion for discussing strategic matters with generals. Eventually General Haig assigned Churchill special quarters at his Staff. It would often happen that Churchill spent the morning working at London's Hotel Metropole, where his ministry was located, and then in the afternoon he would fly across to France, where he would spend the rest of the day.

In March 1918 Germany launched her last powerful offensive on the Western Front, involving all her forces and representing her last hope of winning the war. Churchill was in France at the time, and he kept an eye on how the battle was progressing. The offensive lasted for 40 days and cost Britain 300,000 soldiers. When it was rumoured that the French thought that the British divisions would crumple before the German onslaught and would be routed, Lloyd George sent Churchill to France in order to meet the country's leaders and convince them of the opposite.

Churchill met Prime Minister Clemençeau and the French Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Foch, and he visited military headquarters in their company. He now felt at home once more—right in the thick of events and discussing the course they took with the people who held supreme power. The mission probably had no substantial influence on the outcome of the war, but it undoubtedly gave great pleasure to Churchill.

Germany's March offensive failed. The Allies counter-attacked shortly afterwards, and Germany was obliged to capitulate in November 1918. On 11 November 1918 the First World War ended with the defeat of Germany, and Britain and her Allies celebrated their victory.

Chapter 6

Organiser of the Armed Struggle Against Soviet Russia

On the evening of 11 November 1918, the day that saw the signing of the armistice with Germany, bringing the First World War to an end, Churchill dined with Lloyd George at the Prime Minister's official residence at 10, Downing Street. In London there was wild rejoicing that the war had come to an end. "Every street was thronged with jubilant men and women," Churchill recalls, thinking back to that evening. But Churchill and his table companion were not in festive mood. "There was no feeling that the work was done," he continues. Referring to Lloyd George, he goes on to say: "On the contrary, the realisation was strong upon him that a new and perhaps more difficult phase of effort was before him. My own mood was divided between anxiety for the future and desire to help the fallen foe."

Although Britain's enemies had been vanquished, in Churchill's view "the task was unfinished. Other foes remained in the field; other impulsions challenged the authority of the victors and barred a fair settlement of the world's affairs". By the "other impulsions" that hindered Britain from resolving world problems as she thought fit, Churchill meant the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary movement that had gained ground in a number of European countries. Both Churchill and Lloyd George took the view that the revolution had to be "warred down".

To crush the revolution by force would be a very complex and difficult matter. The British people were sick of war, and Churchill realised that British troops would probably have no great wish to put down the revolution. The military force that might be thrown against the revolution had to be found somewhere else.

In his First World War reminiscences Churchill says that Britain's leaders planned to use conquered Germany in the struggle against the revolution.

In 1920, Churchill wrote that the postwar policy that he favoured was based on the principle: "Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny".

On the very day when Britain reached the end of the First World War, all Churchill's thoughts were already directed towards a new war—a war against Soviet Russia. He was thinking in terms of an alliance with the newly defeated enemy in order to conduct a war against revolutionary Russia. Sudden changes of this sort are a hallmark of British politics in general, and of Churchill in particular.

Churchill was obsessed by the idea of a new, counter-revolutionary war, but he was obliged, for the time being, to conceal his designs from public opinion. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, Lloyd George's coalition government dissolved Parliament and declared fresh elections. The statutory lifetime of the current Parliament, which had been elected in 1910, had expired long before, since the war had prevented the holding of elections on time. Now that the war had ended, the Government went to the country, as the British like to put it.

At the conclusion of the war, Britain had a coalition government consisting of Conservatives and Liberals. A section of the Liberal Party, led by Asquith, did not support the coalition, following a split in the party that had occurred during the war years. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, who was the leader of the pro-coalition Liberals, reached an understanding with the Conservative leaders whereby the coalition members would present a united front at the elections against their political opponents—the Labour Party and Asquith's Liberals. Lloyd George and the Conservative leader, Bonar Law, sent letters to the constituencies in which coalition candidates were standing, inviting the electorate to vote for them. People called these letters "coupons", after the coupons that were needed to buy rationed goods during

the war, and so the election of 1918 is always referred to as the "Coupon" Election.

The victory that had been won after a long and bloody war stimulated chauvinist feelings in Britain, and the coalition did its utmost to whip up these feelings, since it sought to make use of them as vote-catchers at the forthcoming elections and to discredit its political opponents. The coalition leaders fielded the slogan: "Hang the Kaiser", "Make the Germans pay" and "Make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in". The implication was that the execution of the Kaiser would punish all those who had started the war, and the exacting of reparations from the Germans would compensate Britain for the damage that the war had caused her. The reparations would be used to transform Britain so that all people, especially those who had fought at the front, should have good living accommodation, steady and well-paid employment, and far-reaching social services. Admittedly, the coalition glossed over the details and baldly stressed that Britain would be a land fit for heroes.

None of these plans were to Churchill's liking. He had no wish to punish Germany or to weaken her through reparations. He wanted to see a strong Germany, capable of overwhelming revolutionary Russia. But the political game in Britain has its rules, and Churchill, like the other coalition candidates, duly echoed chauvinist slogans in his constituency (which was still Dundee).

The coaliton was victorious at the polls. It won 478 of the 707 seats in Parliament. Only 133 of the seats secured by the coalition went to Lloyd George's Liberals; the Conservatives had the rest. The elections thus amounted, in effect, to a Conservative victory. The Labour Party had only 63 Members at Westminster. It was a Parliament that consisted mainly of businessmen who had done well for themselves out of the war.

The coalition remained in office, but, as is customary in such circumstances, several changes were made in the composition of the government following the elections. Churchill was appointed Secretary of State for War with additional responsibility for the Air Ministry too. Lloyd George was able to make this appointment because the political passions militating against Churchill over the Gallipoli fiasco had largely died down by then. Victory cancelled out the war's mistakes. Even so, there was

opposition to Churchill's appointment. There was particular resentment over the fact that two ministries had been placed in his charge.

Churchill was always a lover of new technology, especially if it was of the military variety. He enjoyed flying in aircraft. At one time he even wished to qualify as a pilot himself. However, his instructor concluded that Churchill did not have the makings of an airman. He lacked "air sense", as well as the calm bearing and composure that a pilot must have. The whole episode ended in a crash, in which he escaped virtually unhurt, while his instructor was quite badly injured. Subsequently Churchill preferred to fly as a passenger.

Lloyd George needed a strong man who had sufficient determination and intelligence to deal with the problem of demobilisation. In fact, Britain's rulers needed a man of iron, but for a different purpose—in order to conduct a war against Soviet Russia, which the British Government had started even before the cessation of hostilities against Germany. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, caustically asked Churchill,as soon as he met his new boss, why the Admiralty had not been thrown into the Churchill basket as well. General Wilson was fully aware that Churchill's appointment meant that all the new minister's energy and enthusiasm would now be brought to bear on a war against Soviet Russia. Churchill's biographers agree that from then on "Russia became Winston's chief preoccupation". Since, during the months that followed, Lloyd George was largely busy with the Paris Peace Conference, Churchill had, in effect, a free hand for his counter-revolutionary adventures.

There was no one among Britain's rulers who would fight more energetically and doggedly against revolutionary Russia than Winston Churchill. The British bourgeoisie immediately adopted a distinctly hostile stance against the October Revolution. They refused to recognise Lenin's Government of Workers and Peasants that was set up by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. The British Government agreed with the Governments of the USA, France and Japan that the Allies would use armed force in order to jointly crush the socialist revolution in Russia. To this end, it sent troops there, acting in concert with its counter-revolutionary partners. It was also active in organising the counter-revolutionary intervention in Russia. While the war with

Germany was still in progress, Britain was, naturally, unable to allocate much in the way of military resources to the struggle against the revolutionary people of Russia. Britain's rulers impatiently awaited the end of the war against Germany so as to mount a large-scale war against Russia.

British imperialists were embittered and frightened by the revolution that had taken place in Russia. But it would be wrong to suppose that, had it not been for the October Revolution, Britain's rulers would have treated Russia in a friendly and sympathetic manner after the First World War, as they should have behaved towards an ally which had made an enormous contribution towards the struggle against the common enemy. Imperialist Britain and imperialist Russia were divided by deep antagonisms. It was because of these imperialist antagonisms that, long before the revolution, London was drawing up plans for weakening Russia and excluding her from European affairs once the war had ended.

The victory of the October Revolution, which brought the workers and peasants to power in Russia, caused a radical change in the nature of the antagonisms between Britain and Russia. Before October 1917, they had been imperialist antagonisms, while after the revolution they were replaced by class antagonisms—a conflict between capitalism and socialism. This was the new antagonism that had been introduced by the October Revolution—the main antagonism of modern times. Quite naturally, it gave rise to an enormous increase in British imperialist hostility towards Russia, a Russia that was now both revolutionary and socialist.

Immediately after the October Revolution, imperialist Britain set about organising a war against Soviet Russia. This class war was intended to weaken Russia as well as to destroy the power of the Soviets.

As Churchill saw the operation, the brunt of the struggle was to be borne by Germany. On 28 October 1918 General Bliss, the American representative to the Entente's Supreme War Council, reported to Colonel House, the US President's personal representative: "Lord M. [Milner, the British Secretary for War] is disposed to object to demobilization thinking that Germany may have to be the bulwark against Russian Bolshevism and Wilson [the Chief of the British General Staff] agrees with him." Later, in 1928, General Bliss touched on the matter again, writing: "As to the idea of not demobilizing the Germans on account of Bolshevism, I

couldn't get from either of them [the British representatives] anything definite as to the force they would allow the Germans to retain nor the amount and character of their equipment. It looked to me as though they would leave the Germans practically fully armed and mobilized." The German leaders played into the hands of Churchill and his associates, and zealously offered their services in the struggle against Soviet Russia.

At the end of the war against Germany, the British Government took a number of decisions to develop the intervention effort in Russia that had been started earlier. On 13 November 1918 it confirmed an agreement that had been initialled with the French on 23 December 1917, dividing Southern Russia into spheres of military operations. On the following day it was decided to supply arms and military equipment to the White General Denikin, to send more officers and more military hardware to Siberia, and to grant *de facto* recognition to Admiral Kolchak's government in Omsk.

At the same time, vigorous measures were taken to build up and reinforce Kolchak's army in Siberia and the interventionist forces in Northern Russia—at Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. On 30 November 1918 the British Government informed its representatives in Arkhangelsk and Vladivostok that it intended to pursue the following policy in Russia: "To remain in occupation at Murmansk and Archangelsk for the time being; to continue the Siberian Expedition; to try to persuade the Czechs to remain in Western Siberia; to occupy (with five British brigades) the Baku-Batum railway; to give General Denikin at Novorossiisk all possible help in the way of military material; to supply the Baltic States with military material." It amounted to a highly ambitious programme for British intervention in Russia. Churchill's appointment as Secretary for War meant that the British Government intended to carry out this programme with all possible speed and vigour.

The British Government was divided as to the best means of conducting a campaign against revolutionary Russia. Churchill was firmly convinced of the necessity and suitability of an armed struggle against Soviet rule until it was completely destroyed, but Lloyd George was very apprehensive. Unlike his War Minister, he felt that it would be a very difficult and risky undertaking. Lloyd George therefore

considered it possible to grant *de facto* recognition to the Soviet Government and to negotiate with it. In this, he was prompted not by any liking for the Soviet system, but by his appraisal of the real balance of power. He understood—better than Churchill and several other Cabinet members—that Soviet rule was strong and was becoming stronger every day. With greater clarity than his colleagues possessed, he foresaw the difficulties of fighting Soviet Russia.

Lloyd George also saw that Britain would need all her resources in order to hang on to the spoils of war and defend them against the claims of her allies. The capitulation of Germany was followed by an intensification of the antagonisms between Britain and France. By the end of the war, France had an enormous army and was attempting to use it in order to bring about a peace settlement that would give her the hegemony of Europe. France was also prepared to struggle for her share of the former German colonies. Britain had no intention of consenting to French control of Europe and wished to reduce France's colonial acquisitions to the minimum. Britain needed all available resources to maintain her interests in the forthcoming diplomatic struggle with France, and so she could not divert them to any considerable extent for the battle against Soviet Russia.

Lloyd George also feared that some kind of alliance might be formed between Soviet Russia and Germany, which he thought was very likely if the revolution in Germany proved successful.

The postwar expansion of the revolutionary movement in Europe and of revolutionary feeling in Britain herself led Lloyd George to believe that, if British soldiers were sent to Russia, they would inevitably absorb Bolshevik ideas and would pose a grave threat to the British social system. The British people were war-weary, the intervention was unpopular, there were economic and financial difficulties, and the strike movement was growing spectacularly. All these factors obliged Lloyd George to hesitate to send British troops to Russia, and to seek other ways of combating the Soviets.

Lloyd George's position in the Government was comparatively weak. He was opposed by ministers like Churchill, Curzon and Cecil. They were backed by the full might of British imperialism, which saw the very existence of Soviet rule in Russia as a deadly threat to itself. Churchill,

Curzon and Cecil were campaigning for a full-scale intervention against Soviet Russia, and they usually managed to ensure that the Government took decisions that were in line with this policy. Lloyd George was not a dangerous opponent for them, since he was inconsistent. He once said that, as regards a Russian policy, he "had found himself frequently leaning first in one direction, and then in another". Nevertheless, the differences of opinion between Churchill and Lloyd George strongly influenced British policy towards Russia throughout the lifetime of Lloyd George's coalition government.

British troops were sent to Soviet Russia in the spring and summer of 1918, i.e. before the war against Germany had come to an end. They were supported by the British Navy. Churchill planned to send considerable reinforcements to Russia as soon as the situation in Western Europe enabled him to do so. Consequently, the War Office, which he controlled, drew up plans for the slowest possible demobilisation. The Army was needed not only to resist revolution, but also for operations in Britain's vast colonial empire, where oppressed peoples, awakened by the revolutionary developments in Russia, were beginning the struggle for national independence.

The attempts to delay demobilisation met with massive resistance from the troops. There was particular unrest at the military camps near London and in Southern England. "In a single week," Churchill wrote, "more than thirty cases of insubordination among the troops were reported from different centres ... in several cases considerable bodies of men were for some days entirely out of control."

Soldiers' Councils appeared in some of the camps, and, occasionally, rebellious troops made contact with workers' organisations. Three thousand soldiers mutinied in London itself on 8 February 1919. Churchill concluded: "A very grave issue had arisen at the physical heart of the State." The mutinies showed a degree of solidarity with Soviet Russia, since the troops were not only calling for quicker demobilisation, but also opposed their despatch to Russia.

Churchill quite rapidly identified the root cause of the problem. He decided that the Army had to be calmed immediately before it was completely engulfed by the wave of revolution. He therefore issued a series of official statements attempting to convince the troops and public

opinion that the delay in demobilisation did not stem from the wish to send troops to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks. At the same time, he tried to accelerate demobilisation. On 19 January 1919 he sent a telegram to Lloyd George in Paris warning him that, if demobilisation were delayed, the Army would degenerate into a "demoralised and angry mob". The British Government took steps to give a quick discharge from the Army to those who had been serving for some considerable time. There were also sizable pay increases for those who stayed in the Army.

January 1919 saw the start in Paris of the conference that was intended to draw up peace treaties for Germany and her wartime allies. The Peace Conference immediately developed into a kind of headquarters for organising an intervention in Soviet Russia.

The British delegation in Paris was headed by Lloyd George, while Churchill remained in London, where the British Government was, with his active encouragement, adopting measures to assist Kolchak, Denikin and other counter-revolutionary forces so that a powerful offensive could be launched against Soviet Russia in the spring of 1919.

As the Secretary for War, Churchill had a virtual monopoly in handling all the practical details in the drive to assist the Whites—the Russian counter-revolutionary forces. He was ably assisted by Curzon, who was temporarily in charge of the Foreign Office, since Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, was in Paris. In Lloyd George's absence, Churchill and Curzon had little difficulty in steering through the Government a number of decisions which had the general aim of increasing the help given to the forces opposed to the Soviets. They were supported by the Conservative majority in the House of Commons. The strong reactionary press also came out against Lloyd George's policy and supported increased intervention.

At the beginning of 1919, when the mounting wave of strikes forced Lloyd George to leave Paris for a while and return to London, several stormy Government meetings took place, and the position adopted by the British delegation to the Peace Conference as regards the Russian issue came under discussion. Churchill and his associates attacked Lloyd George for proposing to call a conference on Princes Island (Prinkipo) which would be attended by Soviet represent-

atives, and called for a tougher policy towards Russia. Lloyd George's Russian policy also came under attack in Parliament. The press launched yet another anti-Soviet campaign in order to show the need for firmer measures where the Bolsheviks were concerned.

In the end, the Government decided that Churchill should go to Paris in order to raise the Russian question once more with the Peace Conference delegates. Churchill would, of course, seek to promote a solution in Paris that would favour continuing and expanding the armed struggle against the peoples of Russia. It was Churchill's forthcoming trip that Lloyd George had in mind when he declared to the Commons on 12 February: "I do not want to go too far, because this is a question which will be under discussion, no doubt, in the next two or three days in Paris, and I do not wish to interfere in the least with the progress of those discussions."

Lloyd George knew perfectly well that in Paris Churchill would press for a policy of extended military intervention. At the same time, he was convinced that it would be rather dangerous for Britain to carry out such a policy, given the current international and domestic political situation. Lloyd George therefore agreed with Churchill that the latter would try to secure a decision that would require Britain and the other Allies to send to Russia only military equipment and experienced volunteer experts. It was further stipulated that the despatch of equipment and volunteers should not reach dimensions that would give rise to "vehement opposition" inside Britain, nor was it to hinder the formation of a regular peacetime Army in Britain consisting of volunteers.

Churchill flew to Paris on 14 February. On 15 February, at a meeting of the Entente's Supreme War Council, he declared that everyone was familiar with the reasons that had prompted the Allies to propose the Prinkipo Conference. However, although a month had now passed, no decision had yet been reached affecting the Allied troops stationed in Russia. The proposal had had the aim of bringing about a cessation of hostilities in Russia. But, if the proposal was not going to produce any results, then the sooner it were dropped the better. There was, he said, a great danger that in the current state of affairs the Allied and friendly armies would gradually melt away. He went on to say that the British Government held the view that the process of disintegration

was proceeding very rapidly, and that the existing friendly armies would probably be the last which it would be possible to raise against Bolshevism. It was therefore important that the proposed Prinkipo Conference should either bear fruit or be discarded.

Churchill then read to the Council a telegram he had drafted, stating: "The supreme desire of the Allies is to see peace restored in Russia and the establishment of a Government based upon the will of the broad mass of the Russian people.

"It is solely with this object that the Princes Island proposal has been made. It is not essential to that proposal that any conference should be held or that representatives of the various Russian forces in the field should meet around a common table. But what is imperative is that fighting should stop and stop forthwith. The Bolshevik Government while verbally accepting the invitation to Princes Island have, so far from observing a truce of arms, taken the offensive in many directions and are at the present time attacking on several fronts. In addition they have called up new classes and expedited and expanded their military preparations.

"It is therefore necessary to fix a precise time within which the Princes Island proposal must be disposed of. Unless within 10 days from the 15th instant the Bolshevik forces on all fronts have ceased to attack and have withdrawn a distance of not less than 5 miles from the present position of their adversaries' outpost lines, the Princes Island proposal will be deemed to have lapsed. If, however, within five days a wireless notification is received from the Bolshevik Government that they have so ceased attacking, so ceased firing and so withdrawn, and if this is confirmed by the reports received from the various fronts, a similar request will be addressed by the Allies to the forces confronting them.

"It is in these circumstances only that a discussion at Princes Island can take place."

The draft telegram presented by Churchill differed substantially from the Allied proclamation adopted on 22 January and proposing the Prinkipo Conference. The proclamation had claimed hypocritically that the Allies had no intention of interfering in Russia's internal affairs, while Churchill's draft admitted that it was their "supreme desire" to organise in Russia "a Government based upon the will of the broad mass of the Russian people". Since by this

Churchill quite definitely meant a government of the bourgeoisie and the landowners, an official statement would have to be made to the effect that the Allies were fighting a war in Russia in order to overthrow the Soviets and set up a bourgeois order. Furthermore, Churchill's text stated that it was not essential to hold a conference, whereas the proclamation of 22 January had proposed a conference, in which the Soviet and the White Governments which existed in Russia at the time should participate on an equal footing. The proclamation had called for the cessation of hostilities by all the governments existing in Russia, while Churchill's draft addressed this demand to the Soviet Government alone. The condition requiring the Soviet Government's enemies to confirm that it had ceased military operations against them meant in practice that the Whites could choose not to halt their operations for a while. What was more, they would, in effect, be able to advance in the wake of the Soviet troops, which would be obliged to make a five-mile withdrawal. By constantly advancing after the Soviet troops, they could demand that they should retire further on the grounds that there was no five-mile zone between the White and Soviet forces. And so on, endlessly.

Churchill's proposal thus amounted to sending an ultimatum to the Soviet Government with a slightly camouflaged call to surrender. Moreover, the conditions on which this surrender would take place were not indicated, except for one point—the abolition of rule by the Soviets. The ultimatum was deliberately formulated in such a way that the Soviet Government could not possibly accept it. Churchill longed for the Soviet Government's rejection so as to have a pretext for organising a concentrated military offensive by the interventionist and White forces against Soviet Russia.

At the same time, Churchill proposed the setting up of an Allied Council for Russian Affairs, a body that would have political, economic and military sections, with executive powers within the limits laid down by Allied policy. Churchill thought that the Council should start work before the Prinkipo proposal was disposed of one way or another, since it would be useful whatever happened. Churchill considered that the military section should set to work immediately, since, if the Soviet forces continued to attack and drive back the Allied and White forces, definite military action would be required, and it would then be necessary to

know what action was possible with the available resources. The military section of the Council should therefore be instructed immediately "to draw up a plan for concerted action against the Bolsheviks".

There were various ways, Churchill said, of working out the details of the plan to set up the Council, but "it was essential to have a body whose duty it would be to study the situation and to estimate the forces the Allies disposed of for the purpose of waging war against the Bolsheviks". Then, if the Prinkipo proposal showed no results, the Supreme War Council would be in possession of a definite plan of war, together with an appreciation of the situation and the resources available, and this would enable it to carry out the suggested plans.

Robert Lansing, the US Secretary of State, said that, with a few changes, Churchill's text was acceptable, but, as for the policy to be pursued towards Russia or the formation of a Council for Russian Affairs, he thought that no action should be taken before there had been consultation with the Governments involved.

Churchill replied that the creation of the Council might be postponed, but that the military section should be organised immediately. France's Prime Minister Clemençeau supported Churchill and said that the Supreme War Council's military advisers could be asked to study the question. The Americans, however, were unable to resolve the matter without the President (who had already left Paris for home) and insisted that the creation of the Council for Russian Affairs and its military section should be postponed.

Clemençeau observed that he was not opposed to Churchill's draft message, but suggested that what was said in two pages could be cut down to ten lines. He attached great importance to the creation of the Council for Russian Affairs and favoured the policy of encircling Russia, i.e. setting up a barrier around her. "A decision in regard to military policy in Russia should be reached without further delay," he emphasised, since he did not want "defeat in Russia, after having been victorious on the Rhine".

The British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, said that steps were necessary "to put the Bolsheviks in the wrong, not only before public opinion". He therefore suggested that a message should be sent to the Soviet Government forcing it either to cease hostilities or to refuse negotiations.

The Italian representative, Baron Sonnino, commented that the Prinkipo policy had been a failure and the less said about it the better. He suggested that the Council for Russian Affairs should be set up immediately so that it could formulate proposals about what further action to take on the Russian question.

Churchill declared that, having gone so far, the British Government could not simply discard the Prinkipo policy before it had been made quite clear to the world that the proposal had been sincerely put forward and sincerely pressed, so long as there was still any chance of its succeeding. "No one should be able to say 'You made a false movement, and you abandoned it. The Bolsheviks were about to accept, and you withdrew.' The British Government wished it to appear that they had acted fairly by the Bolsheviks." It would in any case be ill-advised to brusquely discard the Prinkipo proposal before the military experts had reported on the situation.

Lengthy discussions led to no decision over Churchill's draft message. Balfour realised that this was a very important step, and feared to take it without first consulting the Government. He suggested that the matter be adjourned until 17 February. Despite the backing he received from Clemençeau and Sonnino, Churchill was thus unable to secure the adoption of a single one of the proposals he had tabled.

In Paris Churchill was given strong support by French military leaders, particularly Marshal Foch. Foch and other French generals were thinking of marching across Germany with an enormous army that would include two million fresh American troops, and of then restoring a bourgeois government in Russia by force of arms. Lloyd George wrote that the French military authorities "found in our Secretary of State for War a man who was in entire sympathy with these projects". The reactionary French press did its utmost to support the plans of Churchill and Foch. Britain's bourgeois newspapers also lent a hand.

News about what was happening in Paris finally reached Lloyd George, and he became extremely apprehensive. Upon his departure from Paris, he had left there his personal secretary, Philip Kerr, whose duty it was to keep him informed about everything that occurred at the Peace Conference.

After receiving one of Kerr's reports, Lloyd George telegraphed Churchill: "Am very alarmed at your second telegram about planning war against the Bolsheviks. The Cabinet have never authorised such a proposal. They have never contemplated anything beyond supplying Armies in anti-Bolshevik areas in Russia with necessary equipment to enable them to hold their own.... I beg you not to commit this country to what would be a purely mad enterprise out of hatred of Bolshevik principles. An expensive war of aggression against Russia is a way to strengthen Bolshevism in Russia and create it at home. We cannot afford the burden. Chamberlain [the Chancellor of the Exchequer] tells me we can hardly make both ends meet on a peace basis even at the present crushing rate of taxation and if we are committed to a war against a continent like Russia it is the direct road to bankruptcy and Bolshevism in these islands.

"The French are not safe guides in this matter.

"Their opinion is largely biased by the enormous number of small investors who put their money into Russian loans and who now see no prospect of ever recovering it.

"I urge you therefore not to pay too much heed to their incitement. There is nothing they would like better than to see us pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.

"I also want you to bear in mind the very grave labour position in this country. Were it known that you had gone over to Paris to prepare a plan of war against the Bolsheviks it would do more to incense organised labour than anything I can think of."

In order to make it clear to the Americans that he did not support Churchill, Lloyd George instructed Kerr to show his telegrams addressed to Churchill not only to Balfour, but also to Colonel House, President Wilson's personal representative. Churchill became very indignant when he heard of this. He objected on the grounds that it revealed to the Americans the internal disagreement of the British Government and made it seem as if Lloyd George had no confidence that Churchill would represent his views.

Churchill realised that it would not be possible after all to steer the proposal for setting up a Council for Russian Affairs through the Peace Conference, and so he sounded out Lloyd George on the possibility of creating a military Commission of Enquiry that would identify the measures to be taken in order to assist the White armies operating in Russia. Although

he suggested that this Commission was to have a very limited field Churchill calculated that, as the work developed, the body would become a military headquarters leading an armed struggle against the Soviets.

Lloyd George agreed to Churchill's suggestion regarding the Commission and also to his draft message addressed to the Soviet Government.

The meeting of the Allies' Supreme War Council on 17 February did not return to the question of creating a Council for Russian Affairs and sending an ultimatum to the Soviet Government. The session began with a discussion of Churchill's new proposal, calling for the creation of a Commission of Enquiry consisting of military representatives from several countries, who would be assisted, if necessary, by representatives of these states' naval authorities. The Commission would urgently study and report on the practical possibilities for joint military action that the Allies might undertake in order to help the Whites and the other forces that they supported in Russia to hold out against the Red Army.

Churchill's proposal for this Commission of Enquiry was opposed by the Americans. They took the view that its appointment "would certainly be boomed by the French as the beginning of an anti-Bolshevik war which in turn would produce anxiety among the working classes in England and America". Since the setting up of the Commission might become public knowledge and cause unrest, Balfour proposed that no commission should be appointed officially, but that military representatives should be instructed to hold unofficial discussions, after which each of them would draft a memorandum for his delegation summarising the results of these unofficial contacts. Clemençeau commented that they were dealing with a curious situation in which the leaders of the victorious powers were afraid to openly consult their military advisers about a matter which was generally recognised to be vital to the whole of Europe. But nothing could be done. The imperialist governments were quite literally afraid that their peoples would find out that they were struggling, and intended to continue struggling, against Soviet Russia. Balfour's proposal was adopted.

Churchill had no choice but to accept the failure of his plan. "In these circumstances," he wrote, "it was useless for

me to remain in Paris, and I therefore returned to London on the 18th."

Churchill's proposals failed at the Peace Conference not because its participants were averse to an armed overthrow of Soviet rule, but because the political situation in the Allied countries, and Britain in particular, at the time was such that any expansion in the armed anti-Soviet intervention threatened to touch off a revolutionary explosion. The masses were against war and intervention. If Churchill's proposals had been accepted, British imperialists might have had to struggle against Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies at home, in Britain, as well as in Russia. The strike movement in Britain assumed a vast scale in February 1919, precisely the time when Churchill was vigorously campaigning in Paris. Lloyd George said at the time: "Every morning before I went to the Peace Conference I had messages from London about a strike, and when I returned in the evening about another strike."

Churchill's setback in Paris did nothing to diminish his ardour for the anti-Soviet struggle. With remarkable tenacity and through various methods he tried to convince absolutely everyone of the need to put up a determined struggle against the Russian Revolution. He made public speeches, wrote and sent out memoranda to various influential personages and tried to convince British MPs and foreign representatives in London of the need to stifle the revolution in Russia. Upon his return from Paris, he redoubled his efforts to prepare Admiral Kolchak's campaign against Soviet Russia, which was due to begin in the spring of 1919.

In May 1919 the Paris Peace Conference resolved to recognise Kolchak as the ruler of all Russia and to assist him to extend his authority throughout the length and breadth of the land. The British delegation in Paris was instrumental in formulating and proclaiming this policy. During this period Lloyd George and Churchill were acting in concert. Their political view on the Russian issue had converged in April, when Lloyd George stated that there was no question of conducting any negotiations with the Soviet Government. This was a triumph for Churchill's policy. Lloyd George capitulated and openly joined those who championed the policy of all-out intervention against Soviet Russia. Churchill sprang into action to give effect to the Paris decision. At long last, he was granted official international authorisation to

export counter-revolution to Russia. Churchill organised the despatch of many millions of pounds' worth of armaments and equipment to the interventionist and White armies.

Churchill would gladly have sent more troops to Russia, but the British people were firmly opposed to this. The public were becoming increasingly aware of Churchill's real counter-revolutionary designs. A powerful "Hands off Russia! " movement was gaining strength in the country, led by the mass organisations of the British working class and the cream of the British intelligentsia. In 1919 the British Government bowed to popular pressure and decided to recall its troops from Russia. Since Churchill was in charge of the War Office, he took advantage of his position and attempted, despite the will of the people and the official decision, to continue the war in Russia on his own responsibility.

Churchill suggested the formation of a volunteer corps which would be sent to Russia, ostensibly in order to ensure the evacuation of the British troops already there. The idea was to replace the war-weary troops who were reluctant to fight the Red Army with new, fresh contingents. However, it was impossible to pursue a clear-cut anti-Soviet war, and the evacuation of British troops had eventually to be effected.

Churchill was totally unfamiliar with the theoretical aspects of a socialist revolution. He had no grasp of the historical laws that lay behind the revolutionary changes which were occurring in Russia, nor did he understand the programme of the Bolshevik Party.

But much better than other imperialist politicians he appreciated, intuitively, the immense danger for the capitalist world that had been ushered in by the triumph of the socialist revolution in Russia. This was the source of all his efforts to stifle the socialist centre that had taken shape in Russia, the bulwark of worldwide socialist revolution. As Lloyd George put it, "his ducal blood revolted" against the workers and peasants who had seized power in Russia.

When making speeches about events in Russia, he cast aside all self-restraint and produced a tirade of insults and insinuations, regardless of how monstrous or stupid they might be, against the peoples of Russia, the Bolsheviks and their leaders. Churchill declared that, as a result of the revolution, a "condition of barbarism worse than the Stone Age" had descended upon Russia and that "the Communist theory ... is simply marching back into the Dark Ages". A

few decades later, in 1950, Churchill was to recall, with deep regret, how he had failed, as he put it, "to strangle Bolshevism at birth". He began his frantic struggle against Soviet power as soon as it had come into being; it was a struggle that he maintained till the end of his days.

Churchill hated Russia not just because she was ruled by Soviets, but also because she was an enormous power and had in the past frustrated many British imperialist plans in Europe and Asia. During the First World War he tried to make use of Britain's alliance with Russia in order to weaken Russia as much as possible, and he was delighted to see how terribly exhausted Russia had become by the end of the war. Churchill was triumphant. The last volume of the memoirs he wrote entitled *The World Crisis*, which deals with the postwar period, began with the words: "The conclusion of the Great War raised England to the highest position she had yet attained". However, the development of the revolution in Russia soon clouded the delight of Churchill and Britain's rulers. They came to understand that the proletarian revolution in Russia was a more dangerous threat to British imperialism than the rivalry of the tsarist Russia of old, since it stimulated the development of the working movement in Britain herself.

In addition to this, Britain, and consequently Churchill too, had other important reasons for seeking the destruction of Soviet power. The establishment of the Soviets in Russia posed a direct threat to British colonial domination. The numerous colonial peoples of the British Empire were drawing fresh strength for the struggle against their oppressors from the example so vividly provided by the peoples of Russia, who had accomplished the October Socialist Revolution. "For that reason," Georgi Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, commented, "the danger in the East is a theme on which Churchill continually harps in his speeches. As he himself has frequently stated, Churchill supported Denikin and Kolchak for the simple reason that, as he saw it, they were the defenders of Britain's interests in Persia and India."

Britain's rulers hated revolutionary Russia, but they took exception to a strong bourgeois Russia as well. Hence the plans for dismembering Russia which were so popular in Britain during the Civil War and the intervention. At that time, Churchill considered that a Russia that consisted of

several states on a federation basis would be less of a threat to the future peace of all countries than the vast, centralised tsarist monarchy.

At one time, Lloyd George was also enthusiastic about dismembering Russia. While he was in Paris in November 1919, Lloyd George talked to a member of the American delegation, Frank Polk. Polk's record of the conversation includes the following observation: "His view is that the time has arrived to see whether it is not possible to reach an agreement with the Soviet Government. He strongly feels that Europe will be menaced by a unified Russia. On this account he thinks that Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bessarabia, the Ukraine, the Baltic and Finland, and possibly even Siberia, should be independent."

The people of Britain did not approve of the policy that Churchill was conducting *vis-à-vis* Russia, but he continued nevertheless to fight Soviet power. As Lenin commented, "for several years Britain's Secretary for War Churchill has been employing every means, both lawful and more often unlawful from the viewpoint of British law, to help the whiteguards against Russia, so as to supply them with military equipment. He hates Soviet Russia bitterly."[1]

The disagreements between Churchill and Lloyd George over the attitude to be taken towards Soviet power should not be exaggerated. Their arguments were largely about the methods to be used in the struggle against it. Churchill always defended the need for armed intervention, while Lloyd George, who at certain times considered open intervention impossible for domestic political reasons, favoured negotiation with the Soviet Government, imagining that he would achieve through diplomatic means the same goal as Churchill was also striving towards.

In a report to the All-Union Central Executive Committee, G.V. Chicherin was later to way: "The whole political wisdom of the capitalist world is centered on the banks of the Thames. The statesmen by the Thames are able to see far ahead and are possessed of subtle discernment when it is a question of newly emerging historical forces.

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[1] V.I. Lenin, "Speech Delivered at a Conference of Chairmen of Uyezd, Volost and Village Executive Committees of Moscow Gubernia, October 15, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 323.

Come to terms with a new historical force so as to render it harmless—that is the supreme manoeuvre in traditional British statecraft, which is currently represented by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, with his flexibility, his sensitivity towards all the political and social forces around him, and his ability to compromise. Representing solid business circles, he has to overcome powerful resistance in Britain herself from narrow chauvinist elements and the private group interests with their crude selfishness, and also to overcome the resistance of all the militarist elements, and the military and court spheres." The People's Commissar goes on to say that "the military and extreme chauvinist circles represented by Churchill ... sought to create on the ruins of the Soviet Republic a blatant Entente dictatorship based on a vast bank through which a conquered Russia would be converted into a colonial country".

Soviet Russia fought off the attack on the gains of the October Revolution which was organised in 1919 mainly by Churchill. Britain was experiencing great difficulties at the time as a result of the war, and it was these which frustrated Churchill's plans. The revolutionary sentiments of the working masses, the unprecedented scale of the strike movement, the disintegration of the Army, economic and financial difficulties and, finally, the widespread action of progressive circles against the intervention policy made it impossible to conduct an open struggle against Soviet Russia. The revolution in Germany and the acute revolutionary situation in other European countries also obliged the British bourgeoisie to seek other ways of combating revolutionary Russia. All these factors prompted Lloyd George to withdraw his support from the extremely aggressive and adventurist Russian policy of his Secretary for War.

No one can accuse Churchill of being inconsistent: he took virtually the same attitude towards the working people of Britain as he did towards the workers and peasants of Russia.

Under the influence of the difficulties and sacrifices that the British working class had had to bear during the war, and also under the impact of the events occurring in Russia, Britain experienced a revolutionary upsurge immediately after the war. For Britain this period was the time which marked the beginning of the general crisis of capitalism, which embraced both the economy and the policies and

ideology of British imperialism. From the end of the war to the middle of 1920, the British economy went through a curious commercial and industrial boom. This led to a considerable growth in industrial output and to the expansion of foreign trade, and was attended by rampant inflation. Then, in 1920, a deep economic crisis set in, causing industrial output to slump dramatically. The crisis did not give way to a fresh revival. Between 1922 and 1923 the British economy was stagnant and depressed. The years 1924-1929 —the period which saw the partial stabilisation of capitalism—brought no industrial upsurge either. By 1929 British industry had failed to achieve the 1913 level of output. Economic stagnation entailed massive unemployment, the scourge of the working people of Britain.

This was the economic basis that gave rise to the postwar revolutionary upsurge in Britain, which took the form of a massive strike movement, a growth in the numbers and strength of the trade unions, the struggle of the British working people against the anti-Soviet intervention, and the formation of the Communist Party.

The struggle against the anti-Soviet intervention arose as a manifestation of the British working people's feeling of kinship and solidarity with the country in which the workers and peasants were laying the foundations of the socialist way of running society. At the suggestion of Harry Pollitt, the prominent leader of the Communist Party that was subsequently founded in Britain, the national conference of the "Hands off Russia" movement, which was held in January 1919, passed a resolution about the need to prepare for a national strike in order to put an end to the anti-Soviet intervention. The conference elected a committee of twelve to direct the "Hands off Russia" movement. Thanks to the efforts of left-wing elements in the British working movement, the scale of the British people's struggle to defend Soviet Russia grew steadily.

There are two main points about the British left-wing struggle in solidarity with Soviet Russia: it was a display of proletarian internationalism on the part of the working people of Britain, who came to the support of the state of the working people of Russia, and, at the same time, it was in the fundamental interests of the British people, since it was directed against the attempts of Britain's rulers to draw the country into a war against Soviet Russia.

When this solidarity movement was at its height, the British Communist Party was formed, its inaugural congress being held on 31 July and 1 August 1920. It marked a crucial gain by the working people of Britain and testified to the increased political maturity of the vanguard of the British working class.

The spread of this revolutionary spirit among the British working class made a powerful impact on the Labour Party. Its leaders realised that the party had a real chance of gaining a powerful position in Parliament in the near future. With this end in view, they had already carried out an organisational restructuring of the party in 1918 and had adopted a new programme, which called for socialisation of the means of production. It was not a socialist programme in the strict sense of the term, but it did nevertheless mark an important step forward in comparison with Labour's earlier policies.

When news of the events in Russia filtered through to the far-flung countries of the British colonial empire, it produced a powerful upsurge of the national liberation movement which, to varying degrees, embraced practically all Britain's colonies and dependencies.

The domestic political situation in Britain after the First World War caused Churchill great alarm. He persisted in his belief that the only effective means of resisting the working class was the use of force. He failed to realise that the use of force during the postwar revolutionary upsurge might have dangerous consequences for the bourgeoisie. At the end of January 1919, Churchill's War Office sent round to the commanders of military units stationed in Britain a circular showing his determination to use troops in order to suppress action taken by the British working class. The circular required the commanders to inform the War Office within a week whether the troops would carry out orders to maintain law and order, whether they would help to put down strikes, whether they would be prepared to go abroad on active service, particularly to Russia, what influence the trade unions had among the troops, what effect was produced on the troops by propaganda from domestic and foreign sources, and whether Soldiers' Councils had been set up inside the units.

Churchill was much alarmed by the rapidly growing influence of the Labour Party. He certainly disapproved of the party. Churchill's actions during the early twenties show

that he did not really understand the British Labour movement. The right-wing Labour leaders were not revolutionaries. They were opportunists, and, as such, were interested in arranging co-operation between the working class and the bourgeoisie, rather than in unleashing strife between them. These Labour leaders hoped that, by representing the working class and making deals, in its name, with the bourgeoisie, they could carve out a fine career for themselves inside the bourgeois state. And they were quite right. Several of them later became Prime Ministers. It is the activities of these leaders that explain how it was that the Labour Party, which was largely a working-class party in terms of its membership, espoused bourgeois policies and so came to be a bourgeois party. Churchill did not realise this. It is probable that he even seriously believed that, if the Labour leaders came to power, they would start to introduce in Britain a socialist order reminiscent of what the workers and peasants were building up in Russia. Churchill feared that the political struggle between Conservative and Liberal would enable the Labour Party to triumph through the ballot box and so to create a Government of their own through constitutional means. In the early twenties he therefore floated the idea of founding a Centre Party. The new party was to bring the Conservatives and the Liberals together in a single organisation. The aim was to create a unified political front for the British bourgeoisie so as to prevent Labour from coming to power.

Churchill also had other motives for moving the idea of a new party. For a number of years he had been seeking an opportunity of returning to the Conservative Party. He was with the Conservatives body and soul. Yet, despite the fact that through all his acts and speeches Churchill showed that he was no less Conservative than the Conservatives, in the early twenties they were still in no mood to let their anger subside. His participation in Lloyd George's coalition government together with the Conservatives had not assured Churchill's return to his old party. He now hoped that the Centre Party would enable him to work jointly with the Conservatives inside a new and powerful organisation.

Among the Conservative leaders there were people who, like Churchill, considered it essential to consolidate the political forces of the bourgeoisie in the face of mounting revolutionary feeling in Britain. Such leaders as Austen

Chamberlain, F.E. Smith (who had then become Lord Birkenhead) and several others supported the idea of forming a united bourgeois party. However, broad support for the idea was not forthcoming from the Conservatives and Liberals, and Churchill was eventually compelled to seek more direct ways of returning to the Conservative fold.

The complete failure of the attempts made by Britain and other imperialist powers to overthrow Soviet rule in Russia by using the forces of external and internal counter-revolution had become completely obvious by the beginning of 1921. Within the British Government, this fact led to the triumph of Lloyd George's viewpoint as to the need for the establishment of *de facto* relations with the Soviet Government. This meant that Churchill no longer had anything to do in the War Office, and so in January 1921 he was given a new appointment. Virginia Cowles, one of Churchill's biographers, sums up as follows: "The Civil War had come to an end.... In January 1921 Lloyd George transferred Mr. Churchill from the War Office to the Colonial Office and Mr. Churchill transferred his attention from Europe to the East." Britain's rulers now needed Churchill's firm hand to combat the national liberation movements in the British colonial empire.

During the First World War the British Government had organised Arab risings against Turkey in order to sap their enemy's strength and also to be in a position to take over the Arab lands that were then ruled (only nominally in some cases) by Turkey. It was wartime, scruple was not at a premium, and British agents had been lavish in their promises to Arab leaders. By the end of the war it had become clear that the promises could not be fulfilled, since they were often contradictory, so that the same territories and possessions had been promised to several sheikhs. As a result, the British were coming into increasing disfavour with the Arab aristocracy. As for ordinary Arabs, they were beginning to realise that liberation from Turkish rule had not brought them freedom, but new colonial oppression, this time by the British. Consequently, the British had to maintain large garrisons in Egypt and in the Middle East. Forty thousand British troops were stationed in Iraq alone, costing the British taxpayer £30 million a year.

As Secretary for the Colonies, Churchill set to work to straighten matters out. He invited the British military and

colonial officials who were then working in the Middle East to a conference in Cairo. Churchill's main adviser at the conference was the well-known British agent in the Middle East, Colonel T.E. Lawrence. Churchill and Lawrence took an immediate liking to one another, and the friendly relations that they established were to last for a long time.

Those of Churchill's aides who accompanied him to Cairo later recalled the difficulties that the trip entailed. Everywhere that Churchill and his group went, they were looked upon with hatred by the local populace. When disembarking at Alexandria, they were met by a sombre, hostile crowd. As they left Alexandria for Cairo in the Egyptian Sultan's private train, the people smashed all the train's windows with stones. Churchill's bodyguards were seriously concerned for the lives of the minister and the other members of the group. In the end, both the British and the Egyptian police had to be mobilised in order to ensure the security of the British Colonial Secretary.

The Cairo conference decided to hand the throne of Iraq over to the Emir Feisal. Feisal was made King so as to appease those Arab leaders who had been disappointed in their expectations.

Churchill advanced the idea that, from then on, the brunt of the operation to police the colonial countries, and particularly the Middle East, should be borne by the British Air Force, rather than by the Army (even after moving to the Colonial Office, Churchill still retained control of the Air Force). Previously, colonial peoples in revolt had been shot down by British artillery and rifle fire, but now Churchill proposed that they should be pacified by bombs and aircraft machine-gun fire. Subsequently he was very proud of the idea. His biographers also regarded it as a major achievement. Acceptance of the plan enabled Britain to make great savings. Annual expenditure on the maintenance of troops in the Middle East was cut from £40 million to £5 million a year.

After the Middle East, Churchill had to deal with the Irish problem. It became apparent immediately after the war that the Irish Nationalist Party had lost its influence, and the direction of the national liberation struggle passed to the Sinn Fein Party, which aimed to bring about Irish independence as quickly as possible. The Sinn Fein Party was prepared to secure freedom for its people by force of arms. A bitter and sanguinary war, started by the Lloyd George govern-

ment, soon broke out in Ireland. Despite the overwhelming military superiority of Britain, the situation developed in such a way that she was unable to win the war.

The British Government split over the Irish question. Some ministers insisted that Irish resistance should be suppressed by force and that the British colonial administration should be retained; others asserted that a few concessions were called for and that Ireland should be partitioned, with the Northern Counties being amalgamated with Britain and self-government granted to the Southern Counties. Churchill took up a rather special position. He declared that Irish resistance should first be crushed by force, and only then should the Southern Counties be granted some measure of freedom.

For reasons of domestic and foreign policy, the British Government could not accept Churchill's "radical plan". It saw the futility of armed struggle in Ireland and so offered to negotiate with the Sinn Fein. The negotiations were long and difficult. Churchill did not bear the prime responsibility for the negotiations, but he sat on the Government committee that was conducting them.

The chief Irish representatives were Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. Collins had proved to be an outstanding organiser of the armed struggle against Britain, and so the British Government had set a price of £5,000 on his head. On one occasion the talks were being held at Churchill's house. The conversation suddenly took an acrimonious turn, and Michael Collins declared to the British ministers: "You hunted me day and night! You put a price on my head." "Wait a minute," Churchill replied. "You are not the only one." He rose, took from the wall a framed copy of the reward notice that the Boers had issued shortly after Churchill had escaped from their custody in his younger days, and showed it to Collins. "At any rate," he commented, "it was a good price—£5,000. Look at me—£25 dead or alive. How would you like that?"

Eventually the arduous negotiations with the Sinn Fein resulted in the signing in 1921 of an agreement conferring dominion status on the Southern Counties.

For a long time the British Government was worried by the uncertainty of the situation regarding a peace treaty with Turkey. Churchill, Lloyd George, Birkenhead, Austen Chamberlain, Balfour, and also the Army and Naval

Command took the view that Greece should be the buttress of British interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Many other ministers disagreed with this view and urged that Turkey should not be seriously weakened, so that she could later be Britain's mainstay. Lloyd George and Churchill steered through a decision that was in line with their own plans, and so, through the Treaty of Sevres, Greece not only received some of the Turkish possessions in Europe, but also occupied a part of Anatolia. The War that had started between Greece and the Turkish national liberation forces commanded by General Kemal was indecisive in its early stages, but in 1922 the Greeks suffered a total defeat. The Turks drove the Greek troops back into the sea. There was now a danger that the Turkish forces might turn north, reach the straits and crush the small British garrison posted there. The British Government feared that the Turkish Army might then cross the straits and carry the war against Greece on to the mainland of Europe. This would have meant the final collapse of London's costly policy.

On 15 September 1922 the question was discussed by the Cabinet. It was decided that the advance of the Turkish Army had to be halted. Churchill and Birkenhead were asked to draw up a communique for the press. The communique stated that "the approach of the Kemalist forces to Constantinople and the Dardanelles and the demands put forward by the Angora Government, if assented to, involve nothing less than the loss of whole results of the victory over Turkey in the late war....

"It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to reinforce immediately, and if necessary to a considerable extent, the troops at the disposal of Sir Charles Harington, the Allied Commander-in-Chief at Constantinople, and orders have also been given to the British Fleet in the Mediterranean to oppose by every means any infraction of the neutral zones by the Turks or any attempt by them to cross the European shore."

It was an ultimatum that might have entailed war between Britain and Turkey. There was a whiff of gunpowder in the air, and Churchill threw caution to the winds. The threatening communique was handed to the press before the Prime Ministers of the Dominions had received advance copies from the British Government, and this annoyed them immensely. But this is not the only reason for the negative

reaction of the Dominion governments to Britain's demand that they should send troops for a war with Turkey. The peoples of both the Dominions and Britain herself were sick and tired of the world war that had only just finished. They were in no mood to be drawn into a new military adventure.

The action taken by Churchill and several other members of the Government did not lead to a great tragedy because the British General Harington displayed admirable restraint and common sense. He did not carry out his government's instructions: instead of handing the ultimatum to the Turks, he started negotiations with them which led in October 1922 to the signing of a truce between Britain and Turkey. War had been averted, but the British public realised what a close shave it had been. The English historian A.J.P. Taylor concludes: "'The British people felt that they were being recklessly hurried into an unnecessary war." Churchill and Lloyd George would not be forgiven for this by their compatriots. They had chosen the wrong moment to try to start yet another armed conflict.

Churchill's military failures provided ammunition for numerous jokes. One of the verses in circulation in 1923 was:

Great Churchill of Gallipoli,
Who did immortal glory win
Through Kolchak and through Denikin.
Saved Antwerp; pacified the Turk
And now is needing further work.

By the end of 1922 the Conservative-Liberal coalition was nearing the end of the long road. The Conservatives had tolerated Lloyd George as head of the Government during the first few years after the war, when the working-class movement had been surging through Britain and elsewhere, but now they did not regard the alliance with him as being essential. They held against Lloyd George his inability to successfully combat Soviet rule in Russia (as though anyone else in his position could have ensured the success of the intervention). The Conservatives thought that Lloyd George had gone too far in his handling of the Irish question. Nor did they like the concessions that had been made to the British working class since the war. The Conservatives sought to use the decline of the Liberal Party in order to maintain themselves in power. Now that peace had returned, they wanted a one-party government, as is traditional in Britain. On 19 October 1922 the Conservatives issued a statement

terminating the coalition. Lloyd George had no choice but to resign. As he accepted his resignation, the King said he hoped that not very much time would pass before Lloyd George became Prime Minister once again. However, Lloyd George lived for a further quarter of a century, but he was unable to become even an ordinary minister, let alone form a government.

A new administration, with members supplied by just one party, came into being under the Conservative leader, Bonar Law. It consisted mainly of younger men, among whom the Big Business representative, Stanley Baldwin, was prominent. Since Churchill was a Liberal, he was not included. His resulting irritation may probably be held to account for his highly critical view of the new government. In a reference to Bonar Law, he wrote: "He formed a Government of what one might call 'The Second Eleven'."

Bonar Law dissolved Parliament and called a general election. Churchill fought a hard and unsuccessful campaign.

The first few years after the war saw a rapid demarcation of the country's political forces. The upsurge of the working-class movement in Britain and the socialist revolution in Russia brought about a sharp increase in the working people's interest in socialism. At the same time, frightened by the wave of revolution, all the reactionary forces of the British bourgeoisie stepped up their activities considerably. Churchill surveyed the situation and concluded that he would be able to strengthen his political position and move closer to the Conservative Party by showing uncommon enthusiasm for the struggle against socialism. It must be said that he had a poor knowledge of the forces that were operating from more left-wing positions, although he sensed that the danger that they posed for the British bourgeoisie was growing.

In the new elections Churchill stood once again in what he thought was the safe constituency of Dundee, which traditionally favoured the Liberals. But by this time there had been a marked leftward swing among the Dundee electorate. Churchill failed to take this into account. He declared that he would fight the election as a Liberal and a supporter of Free Trade.

The people of Dundee no longer found Liberalism attractive. They were interested in a more left-wing policy. To make matters worse for Churchill, most of the electorate had already seen that really he was not even a Liberal, but a

reactionary, dyed-in-the-wool Conservative. This was clearly indicated by what Churchill had been doing over the previous few years. His aggressiveness during the First World War, his unbridled hostility towards Soviet Russia, his readiness to use the armed forces on any occasion to quell the British working class, and the active part he had played in organising the struggle against the national liberation movement, all showed that Churchill had long since parted company with the whims of his political youth, when he had courted Liberalism.

Churchill's main electoral opponent was E.D. Morel, a former Liberal who had by then switched his allegiance to the Labour Party. He was a fine speaker and had an impressive grasp of international relations. He poured withering criticism on the policies of the wartime Government, and particularly on the mistakes committed by Churchill. Anything that Morel omitted to mention was picked up by the Communist candidate, William Gallacher.

Churchill had to defend himself in earnest. Politically, his position was complicated. His present sympathies lay with the Conservatives, while the feelings of the electorate were clearly edging towards socialism. Faced with this situation, Churchill decided to tread the middle ground. He declared that he was opposed both to the extremes of diehard Conservatism, and to socialism. He soon realised, however, that even this ambiguous position was not a very promising one. He had to sprout progressive plumage while on the wing, and so he started talking about the serious housing conditions of the working people, the need to improve them, the desirability of raising unemployment benefit, and the necessity of improving the public services. Churchill went so far that he even referred to the Conservatives as a retrograde party. But the camouflage failed to work. The voters did not believe Churchill. They had every reason to suspect that he was deliberately deceiving them with the sole aim of securing their votes.

An unfavourable circumstance of a completely different kind arose unexpectedly. At the start of the electoral campaign, Churchill was rushed to hospital to have his appendix removed. Consequently, during the initial stage of the struggle, he could only communicate with the voters through the letters and appeals which he sent to the constituency. It was very important for him to keep his Parliamentary seat during this crucial time, when the balance

of forces inside the country's ruling upper crust was being determined. Although not fully recovered, Churchill therefore left hospital and appeared in his constituency.

He was amazed by the hostile reception he was given. He later recalled that, if it had not been for the helpless state he was in, he might have actually come to physical harm. On 14 November 1922 Churchill attempted to address a mass meeting attended by 9,000 people. He was borne on to the platform in an invalid chair. Despite this, the audience was extremely hostile. All his attempts to speak were frustrated by hecklers. "I was struck by looks of passionate hatred on the faces of some of the younger men and women," Churchill wrote. "Indeed but for my helpless condition I am sure they would have hit me." The voters' hatred for Churchill expressed the masses' extreme indignation at the policies which they rightly believed he was pursuing.

The results of the 1922 election came as a heavy blow to Churchill. He suffered a crushing defeat, with his main rival, the Labour Party's E.D. Morel, being elected to Parliament. For the first time since 1900, Churchill was outside Parliament. Recalling the December elections of 1922, he was subsequently to write with bitter humour: "In the twinkling of an eye I found myself without an office, without a seat, without a party, and even without an appendix."

Chapter 7

Back to the Conservatives

Churchill's doctors advised him to take a rest after the operation. He needed both to convalesce and to gather his thoughts after the electoral disaster of 6 December 1922. Once the voting returns had been published, Winston and Clementine set off for the South of France. They were accompanied by a maid, a footman and a secretary. Churchill took a large quantity of writing paper and all his drawing requisites with him.

He did a great deal of painting. It soothed the nerves and provided a distraction from the frustration caused by the vicissitudes of life. He enjoyed painting in the South of France, in Italy, Spain, North Africa and the islands of the Mediterranean. He was not very fond of the pallid hues of the English landscape and the grey skies over Britain. He preferred the vivid colours of the Mediterranean, the bright blue sea and the equally bright sky above it. Churchill found in painting consolation, relaxation and real pleasure.

There were people who spoke sincerely, or maybe almost sincerely, of his "exceptional talent" in the field. They claimed that Churchill was a "highly promising" painter and drew favourable comparisons with the work of professionals. It is certainly true that he was very successful for an amateur. In 1921 he exhibited five of his landscapes in Paris. He did not venture to put his real name to the paintings, preferring instead the pseudonym "Charles Morin". Four of the pictures

were sold, fetching £30 each, which was a good price for an unknown artist making his début. In all fairness to Churchill, it must be said that he did not let this success go to his head.

Painting may have been a hobby for Churchill, but his literary work became a business. He had published his last major book long before the First World War broke out. This was the biography of his father, and had been well received by the critics. Now that Churchill had plenty of leisure, he decided once more to engage in literary output. He had written on various minor issues during the war years, when he had been removed from the centre of public life for 20 months. But the end product there had just been newspaper and magazine articles, written both for money and for self-advertisement. By the twenties the material stimulus behind Churchill's writing had waned. A distant relative, the Marquess of Londonderry, had left him a sizable bequest. This, added to what he had already amassed, gave him an income of £5,000 a year—a large sum, matching the salary of a Cabinet minister. It enabled Churchill to lead the life that was customary among the British aristocracy and the upper reaches of the bourgeoisie. But Churchill liked writing books and was unable to resist the urge whenever time permitted. Writing was his favourite occupation after politics.

At the end of 1922 Churchill settled on the French Riviera and began to write a major work, entitled *The World Crisis*, that would run into four or five volumes. (Churchill did not like short books and was unable to write them.) The idea of such a book had probably occurred to him right at the beginning of the war, and possibly before it. Even then he had been engaged in preparatory work, carefully collecting letters and copies of the documents and memoranda that passed through his hands. The British Government's clerical procedures at the time, and even subsequently, were such that Churchill was able to keep copies of all these official, and sometimes even secret, documents.

Churchill now made use of this mass of documents in writing *The World Crisis*. Rough drafts of the first two volumes had been prepared somewhat earlier. They dealt with the period from 1911 to the outbreak of war (Volume 1) and with the first year of the war, including the Dardanelles tragedy (Volume 2). Churchill had written the most important chapters in Volume 2 during the war, and he

had attempted to prove that it was unfair to hold him personally responsible for the disaster. At the time, Asquith had prevented him from publishing this material, but Churchill now included it, unmodified and unabridged, in the second volume.

He worked quickly and very productively. He was able to concentrate his unusual ability and retentive memory on whatever he was engaged in at any particular moment, setting everything else aside. He dictated the whole of *The World Crisis* to his secretary. As he dictated, Churchill paced up and down the room, constantly chewing his cigar, which was often unlit. He was quite right to dictate. Not only was it faster, but the end product was often better from the literary point of view: he always spoke better than he wrote. While working on *The World Crisis*, he managed to dictate between three and four thousand words a day.

The first two volumes were published in 1923. Two more volumes appeared shortly afterwards, followed some time later by the fifth, and final, volume.

The title shows that the author intended to write a kind of world history covering the prelude to the First World War, the war itself and the peacetime settlements that followed. But this grand design was not really accomplished: what Churchill actually wrote was not so much history as an account of his own doings during those years. When discussing all the most important world events of the period, Churchill consistently leads the reader to conclude that he, Churchill, not only played a very active part in shaping these events, but even guided the course they took.

More vividly, perhaps, than all Churchill's earlier books, *The World Crisis* embodied his idea that history is made by heroes. He depicted himself as just such a creator of history. He regarded himself as being far superior to his contemporaries as a politician and imagined that only the affairs of state that he had personally managed had been conducted correctly and rationally, while everything that others had done had always turned out badly. Needless to say, he did his utmost to settle scores with his old enemy, Asquith. This was the standpoint Churchill adopted in portraying his own activities and those of his colleagues in the five volumes of *The World Crisis*. It is therefore hardly surprising that Lord Balfour, with whom Churchill was already on quite good terms by then, and who was doing his best to help him find a

way of returning to the Conservative Party, once commented that he had been much impressed by the brilliant autobiography that Churchill had produced in the guise of world history.

The press turned *The World Crisis* into a sensation. Friends and foes alike generally agreed that Churchill had developed a good literary style and that his books made easy and interesting reading, despite their bulkiness. The English novelist Arnold Bennett remarked that Churchill was almost as readable as Macaulay. This comparison with Macaulay was high praise indeed for Churchill, since Macaulay had been the model he had always endeavoured to imitate.

The World Crisis is a skilful blend of autobiography and historical narrative. It cannot be regarded as a work of history, as British historians conluded, more or less unanimously, as soon as the first two volumes appeared. In a review for *The Times*, A.F. Pollard, the Professor of English History at London University, called Churchill's book "an apologia for the Admiralty" and commented that "an apologia may be first-class material for history but cannot be history itself".

Churchill was already accustomed to receiving inflated royalties for his literary works. He was paid the vast sum of £20,000 for the first two volumes of *The World Crisis*. His financial position was then very sound, and in the spring of 1923 he used the latest royalties to buy a country house standing in fairly extensive grounds. The property was called Chartwell, and Churchill lived there till the very end. He had another house in London which he used when he was no longer a member of the Government and so had no official residence.

Writing, painting and the pleasure of settling into his new home were unable to cheer Churchill up, and he often lapsed into a state of depression. The reason was that he was now on the political sidelines, whereas he loved to be at the centre of events and influence their course.

During his enforced political idleness Churchill closely followed the debates in the Commons and the activities of the Government. If anyone called to see him at Chartwell or if he himself went visiting, the conversation invariably revolved around politics, politicians and current affairs. Ultimately, in all these conversations Churchill tried to prove that the affairs of the country and the world at large would

proceed much better if he, Churchill, were allowed to direct them.

He had reason to be disgruntled. The last Parliamentary elections, at which he had been mauled in so unseemly a fashion by the voters of Dundee, had produced a Conservative majority. The Liberals had suffered a crushing defeat. What Churchill found particularly galling, however, was the fact that the Labour Party had won more Parliamentary seats than the two Liberal groups combined, and had become His Majesty's official Opposition. This portended a great deal. In all probability, it meant that the Labour Party would soon increase its Parliamentary representation through the ballot box and would become the ruling party instead of the Opposition. If that happened, Labour would assume the place in British politics that had been occupied for many years by the Liberals.

The Liberals' impending departure from the political stage touched Churchill very deeply. He was, after all, still officially considered to be a Liberal. If the Liberal Party had no chance of subsequently resuming office, what would then become of Churchill? The situation prompted him more insistently than ever before to seek a way of returning to the Conservative fold. The point now was not just the fact that Churchill was a wholehearted Conservative; his resumption of active political life depended on his returning to the Conservative Party.

Labour was now becoming a real power alongside the Conservatives, but Churchill could not even consider joining the Labour Party. He was the sworn enemy of the people who formed the bulk of the party, and Labour took a similar view of Churchill. That was the state of affairs in 1923 and 1924. It is hardly surprising that people like Lloyd George and Lord Birkenhead, who were close to Churchill and knew him well, thought at the time that his political career was over and that henceforth he would show his prowess in literature alone. "In those days," Virginia Cowles writes, "it was the fashion to ridicule Churchill and if he had died before the age of sixty his obituary notice would not have praised him as a statesman."

The collapse of British Liberalism was not the result of subjective factors or the errors of individual politicians; it was a characteristic and inevitable feature of Britain in the twenties.

The general crisis of capitalism, which also affected Britain's social and economic system, and the mounting class struggle drove a wedge between the working people and the liberal bourgeoisie. Reactionary elements in the Liberal Party were moving closer to the Conservatives, while those of a more radical temper were siding with Labour. The Liberal Party was being whittled down by the growing class antagonisms, and the Liberals were gradually ceasing to be one of the two main parties which took it in turns to hold office. The place of the Liberal Party in Britain's two-party system was taken over by Labour.

Churchill's friends were too quick to mourn the demise of his political career. He himself clearly had no intention of being satisfied with what he had already achieved in politics by the early twenties. He realised, above all else, that he could only make a come-back through the Conservative Party, so that it was therefore necessary, whatever the cost, to return to the Conservatives. For this purpose, it was important for him to adopt a rabidly anti-socialist posture. On 4 May 1923 Churchill declared at the Aldwych Club in London: "We see developing a great, vehement, deliberate attack upon the foundations of society.... We see not only Liberals of the Left but Conservatives of the Right assuring the country that there is no danger of Socialism or of a Socialist Government ... [and] that the Labour leaders are very sensible and honest men." Churchill called for a vigorous struggle against the Labour movement. The accusations on the subject that he levelled against the Conservatives were probably not deliberate tactical exaggerations. Rather, they reflected Churchill's true feelings, prepared as he was to do battle wholeheartedly with revolutionary socialism and the British Labour movement.

The writer H.G. Wells had good reason to see a similarity between Churchill's position and that of the Italian fascists. "He believes quite naively," Wells wrote, "that he belongs to a peculiarly gifted and privileged class of beings to whom the lives and affairs of common men are given over, the raw material of brilliant careers. His imagination ... is an imagination closely akin to the d'Annunzio type [d'Annunzio was an Italian poet and fascist leader—*V.T.*]. In England, d'Annunzio would have been a Churchill, in Italy, Churchill would have been a d'Annunzio." The great English writer keenly perceived the spiritual affinity between Churchill and

d'Annunzio. After a little more time had passed, Churchill himself was to make enthusiastic speeches about the Italian fascists.

In 1923, the Conservative leader and Prime Minister, Bonar Law, suffering from cancer of the throat, retired and died shortly afterwards. Churchill's most implacable and influential enemy in the Conservative camp, a man who would have no compromise and who was resolutely opposed to Churchill's return to the Conservative Party, thus vanished from the political scene. Stanley Baldwin, with whom Churchill had made some contact, became the Conservative leader and Prime Minister.

Baldwin was then an advocate of the immediate introduction of Protection. He therefore dissolved Parliament and declared a general election in December 1923 so that it could be fought on the issue of Protection. This enabled Churchill to have another stab at entering Parliament.

Baldwin's onslaught against the Free Trade principle, which was dear to the heart of any Liberal, made all the Liberals rally together—both the supporters of Lloyd George and the followers of Asquith. They formed a united electoral front against the Conservatives. Churchill found himself in a tricky situation. He could not simply abandon the slogan of Free Trade which he had bandied about for many years, ever since the time when he had fought Joseph Chamberlain. This would have been seized upon immediately by his numerous enemies. But he did not dare to oppose the Conservatives either, since he regarded it as essential to rejoin them as soon as possible. He therefore contested the election as a Liberal Free Trader in a constituency where his opponent was not a Conservative, but a Labour man.

Once again, Churchill's electoral campaign was a failure. The attacks on socialism, the Labour Party and the Soviet Union with which he had been easing his way back towards the Conservatives before the elections had the natural result of setting against him all the more or less progressive and liberal elements in the constituency. The publication of the first two volumes of *The World Crisis* breathed fresh life into the old phantom of the Dardanelles fiasco. Churchill was particularly detested by the workers. They prevented him from uttering a word at every meeting. When, on 3 December 1923, he attempted to speak in one of the districts of London, the authorities had to send in both mounted and

foot police to protect him. A brick was thrown at the window of his car and a fist waved in his face as he attempted to retain his composure. With great difficulty the police managed to ward off any major mishap. In an interview given to the *Evening News*, Churchill described the hecklers as "the worst crowd I have ever seen in England in twenty-five years of public life. They were more like Russian wolves than British workmen." He was defeated once again at the polls.

The election results created a complicated situation in the Commons. The British people were still not politically mature enough to break with Free Trade and adopt Protection. The Conservatives consequently lost nearly 100 Parliamentary seats and had a final representation of 258. The combined Liberals won 159 seats, and the Labour Party 191. Labour had strengthened its position considerably. But no single party had an overall Commons majority. Since the Conservatives and Liberals were unable to form a coalition government owing to their differences over Protection, the Labour Party was invited to govern for the first time in British history.

Labour did not have a Parliamentary majority and so depended on Liberal votes. This, combined with the political complexion of the Labour leaders, caused Britain's upper crust to feel generally safe in experimenting with a Labour government. If it began to act against the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie, it could be unseated by a mere vote in Parliament.

After his second electoral defeat, Churchill stepped up his attacks on socialism and the Labour Party still more. Swimming against the current of general opinion, he said that Labour should not be allowed to form a government. He tried to intimidate the British bourgeoisie by claiming that, once in office, Labour would demolish the country's social and economic structure.

His voice, however, was ignored, and on 23 January 1924 Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party, formed Britain's first Labour government. By and large, Churchill's forecasts were not borne out. The new government conducted a bourgeois domestic and foreign policy, although it did establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union so as to appease the masses. This further whetted Churchill's appetite for attacking the Labour leaders and attributing revolutionary aims to them.

Such behaviour was very damaging to Churchill in the eyes of ordinary people, but it made him more akin and necessary to the Conservative Party. The Conservative leaders were already inclined to help Churchill return to his old party. The future held out the prospect of a stubborn and probably lengthy battle against the new political foe—the Labour movement—and Churchill might prove very useful in the skirmishing. What was more, the Conservatives then had no one who was Churchill's equal in ability, determination and vigour. Consequently, when, in February 1924, a by-election had to be fought in one of the constituencies, several Conservative leaders tried to get Churchill accepted as a candidate.

The seat belonged to a constituency in London's Westminster area. The area contains the House of Commons and many Government offices. Churchill's Conservative friends—Lord Birkenhead, Austen Chamberlain and Lord Balfour—requested the Westminster Constitutional (i.e. Conservative) Association to adopt Churchill as its candidate. However, the Conservative leadership may have been ready to deal with Churchill, but most rank-and-file Conservatives were still up in arms against him. The Westminster Conservatives stated that their candidate would be not Churchill, but Captain Otho Nicholson, the retired Member's nephew.

In an effort to help Churchill, Lord Birkenhead wrote an article for *The Sunday Times*, arguing the need for Churchill's return to the Conservatives. He said that Churchill had always been a Tory at heart, which was true enough. He went on to claim that Churchill would never have severed his connection with the Tory Party if the Conservative Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, had offered him a post in the Government. This was also true. Probably Birkenhead was still discomforted by the consideration that thinking people could easily conclude from his statement that Churchill's return to the Conservatives was also a careerist move. In order to dispel this impression, Birkenhead wrote that Churchill had never in all his life failed a friend. It is significant that Birkenhead was obliged to resort to such an argument in order to defend his protégé, for Churchill's political activities provided no examples of steadfastness or reliability.

The move to foist Churchill on to the Westminster Conservative association failed. But this did not stop Chur-

chill. He decided to fight for the Parliamentary seat and stood as an "independent anti-socialist". This formulation was a half-truth. He was not really independent, as was shown by his desire to return to the Conservatives, but he was undoubtedly anti-socialist. By standing against the wishes of the local Conservative organisation, Churchill was placing himself in an invidious position. He longed to return to the Conservatives, yet in the election he was standing against the official Conservative candidate. In order to explain away this rather awkward point, Churchill declared: "My candidature is in no way hostile to the Conservative party or its leaders. On the contrary I recognise that party must now become the mian rallying ground for the opponents of the Socialist party."

The Times commented that the Westminster Conservatives had selected Nicholson as their anti-socialist candidate. Churchill's intrusion represented an attempt to undermine his chances. What kind of anti-socialist did that make Churchill, the paper asked. He parried the thrust by the following statement: "If I thought that the present Conservative candidate really represented the force of character of the constituency I should not have come forward as a candidate. An important public principle is involved. The days of family preserves and pocket boroughs ought not to be revived. It is not right that the Westminster Abbey division should be passed on from hand to hand as if it were a piece of furniture—handed on from father to son, or from uncle to nephew."

Churchill was to show, 20 years later, that this was pure and unadulterated rhetoric. In February 1944, when Churchill was Prime Minister, Lord Hartington, the eldest son of the Duke of Devonshire, stood as a candidate in a by-election in the constituency that had previously been represented in the Commons by his uncle. Churchill wrote Hartington a letter of support, saying: "My dear Hartington, I see that they are attacking you because your family has been identified for about three hundred years with the Parliamentary representation of West Derbyshire. It ought, on the contrary, to be a matter of pride to the constituency to have such a long tradition of such constancy and fidelity through so many changing scenes and circumstances." This is thoroughly typical of Churchill. He would uphold one principle when it was to his advantage to do so, yet championed

another, diametrically opposite one when the situation changed.

The Conservatives in the Westminster constituency were annoyed by Churchill's high-handedness. In order to weaken his position, they started the rumour that he had refused to return to the Conservative Party. Churchill found it difficult to refute this charge. He would gladly have told the truth, which was that he was striving wholeheartedly to return to the Conservatives, but at that particular time he could not declare this openly. He replied that he had struggled against socialism for the last 20 years of his political life and so he therefore considered that he could collaborate with the Conservative Party. He countered the remark that, by talking about co-operation with the Conservatives, he was changing his political position by saying: "If I am able to co-operate cordially with the Conservative Party at this juncture it is not because I have changed my position. It is because they have very wisely and rightly returned or are in process of returning to a broad and progressive platform."

In fact, there was nothing "progressive" about the Conservative Party at all. On the contrary, throughout the 20 years that had passed since Churchill had defected from it, the party had been constantly edging further to the right and had become more reactionary. In the age of imperialism it developed into the party of monopoly capital and was the most reactionary political force in the country. The Conservatives stood for a wide-ranging offensive against the working class within the country and for reinforcing Britain's colonial positions and imperialist foreign policy. But what else could Churchill have said to justify himself? He could hardly have admitted that he was abandoning the Liberal ship because it was about to sink, and that he was asking to be taken on board the Conservative vessel because it was more to his advantage.

During the Westminster by-election Churchill was supported by a number of influential Conservative leaders. The members of many aristocratic families also campaigned on Churchill's behalf, and no expense was spared. Nevertheless, his opponent, Captain Nicholson, an insignificant political figure, received 43 votes more. This was Churchill's third electoral failure in just over a year.

Although Churchill was thus deprived of the opportunity to attack the Labour Government inside the Commons, he

continued to assail it outside Parliament. He particularly condemned the Labour leaders for establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. He had vehemently opposed the negotiations that had been conducted between the British and Soviet Governments on the conclusion of a trade agreement and the settlement of a number of controversial political issues.

The first Labour Government was short-lived. In October 1924 the Liberals refused to support it, and MacDonald dissolved Parliament. Fresh Parliamentary elections were held on 29 October 1924.

The Conservatives staged a major scandal in order to guarantee victory in the elections. A few days before polling day, they published a forged letter from the Comintern in which the Comintern's Executive Committee allegedly issued instructions to the British Communist Party about how to organise an armed rising and to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie in Britain. The objective was to scare the wavering sections of the petty bourgeoisie with the threat of revolution into voting for the Conservatives, who were campaigning from the anti-communist and anti-Soviet band-waggon.

Here Churchill was in his element. Seizing on the forged letter, he lashed the British Labour Party and the Soviet Union with renewed vigour. Referring to the Soviet leaders, he declared: "They write to order that preparations shall be made for bloody revolt to be started and for civil war, flames, and carnage to disturb and defile our streets.... I say such a situation has never occurred in the history of this country."

This time, the Conservatives made Churchill an official candidate, in the Epping constituency, which was a safe Conservative seat. The Conservatives won the elections, gaining a total of 419 Parliamentary seats. Labour won 151 seats, and the Liberals were left with only 40. Accordingly, on 7 November 1924 Stanley Baldwin formed a Conservative government. The British were amazed when the list of chief ministers was presented to them. As the historian A.J.P. Taylor remarks, "Churchill, a Free Trader who understood nothing of finance, became Chancellor of the Exchequer". This was a major government post, second only to that of Prime Minister. Thus, the Conservative leaders had a high regard for Churchill's zeal in the fight against socialism, not only receiving him back into the party, but also rewarding

him handsomely. Certainly not all Conservatives were happy about Baldwin's extravagant generosity. They muttered that, if the party were still headed by Bonar Law, this would not have happened.

Apart from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the British Government also has another chancellor—the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a minister without portfolio and an insignificant, third-rate post. Churchill had occupied the position for a few months during the First World War. It is said that, when Stanley Baldwin was offering Churchill a government post and asked him how he would feel about becoming Chancellor, Churchill accepted, assuming that he meant Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. To his extreme amazement, Baldwin declared that he was offering to make him Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such a post was beyond Churchill's wildest dreams. Just a few months earlier, he had neither a party nor a Parliamentary seat, and he seemed to have been consigned to total political oblivion. Then, suddenly, at the end of 1924, he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, the next in line to succeed the Prime Minister.

Stanley Baldwin was a shrewd man, although he pretended to be a simpleton. While Bonar Law had considered that it was better to have Churchill against him, Baldwin preferred to have him alongside. Baldwin, among others, feared that, if Churchill were excluded, he might join forces with Lloyd George, who had also been left on the sidelines. They might then link up with their friend, the well-known Conservative leader Lord Birkenhead. Such a triumvirate of robust and determined men, the country's best speakers at the time, might stir up a lot of trouble for the Conservative Government. In order to forestall the emergence of such a combination against him and to harness Churchill's energy and ability to the Conservative administration, Stanley Baldwin sent for him and made him Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had acted in accordance with a time-honoured British political tradition.

Churchill's appointment as Chancellor also seemed strange because it was well known that he was a complete ignoramus in financial matters and took not the slightest interest in them. This was an inherited feature. His father, Lord Randolph, who never could get the hang of decimals, had also hated finances. Winston himself had found arithmetic an uphill struggle while he was at school. But the post of

Chancellor was too important for Churchill to reject it for the trifling reason that he had no grasp of the matters that would be entrusted to him.

Financial experts agree that Churchill was a poor Chancellor, being no more than the mouthpiece of his advisers. Robert Boothby, who was Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Treasury, subsequently wrote: "He was basically uninterested in the problems of high finance." Virginia Cowles comments: "To have him in charge of the Treasury at a time when his outlook towards the working class was peculiarly rigid and defiant was a calamity both for the nation and himself." A.J.P. Taylor's view is: "His erratic finance discredited him in the eyes of more sober politicians and left the treasury weaker to face a period of real economic difficulty." Churchill's incompetence in the field became apparent shortly after his appointment.

The announcement of the annual budget is quite a ceremony in Britain. Budget Day, when the budget is submitted to the Commons, is always known well in advance, and a crowd of Londoners and visitors gathers to watch the Chancellor emerge from his residence at Number 11, Downing Street. He finally appears, armed with an inscrutable smile and a small, battered, red despatch box, which contains the draft budget. The new budget is eagerly anticipated: it may bring concessions to some, while others will have to pay higher taxes. Accompanied by members of his family, who will sit in the Visitors' Gallery at the Commons, the Chancellor usually makes his way to Parliament and delivers a speech presenting the budget's main features and justifying the changes he has made. The scene was duly enacted on 28 April 1925, when Churchill submitted his first budget to the Commons. Everything proceeded smoothly at first. The new Chancellor was a fine speaker, and he delivered a lively Budget Speech.

Churchill's budget was long to be remembered in British history and had far-reaching consequences. It brought the pound back to the Gold Standard. During the war years and the postwar period the real value of the pound sterling had fallen considerably. It was now being restored to its prewar parity of £1=US $4.86.This reform benefited British financial circles, at whose demand it was carried through. It has been calculated that Churchill's reform enabled *rentiers* to pocket about £1,000 million.

However, the return to the Gold Standard came as a heavy blow to British industry and the British working class. The British financial expert John Maynard Keynes, then a comparatively young man, worked out that the financial reform resulted in a rise of about 12% in the world market price of British goods. This meant that British goods would be less competitive than those of other countries. In order to maintain a competitive position, British industrialists would inevitably have to try to cover this 12% by lowering wages, which is precisely what happened.

In his pamphlet *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill* Keynes says of Churchill: "Why did he do such a silly thing? Partly, perhaps, because he has no instinctive judgment to prevent him from making mistakes; partly because, lacking this instinctive judgment, he was deafened by the clamorous voices of conventional finance; and most of all, because he was gravely misled by his experts."

Since Churchill's budget benefited only the financial bourgeoisie, Labour charged into the attack on the new Chancellor. Hugh Dalton, then a young financial specialist, followed Keynes's appraisal of the new budget in his onslaught against Churchill. "We on these benches will hold the Chancellor of the Exchequer strictly to account, and strictly responsible," he declared, "if, as we fear, there should be a further aggravation of unemployment and of the present trade depression as a result of his action, and should it work out, that men who are employed lose their jobs as a result of this deflation. Should that be so we will explain who is to blame."

The budget reinstituted a few very limited protectionist measures. First introduced during the war years, and then abolished by the MacDonald Government, they did not yet amount to British adoption of Protection. But since it was a question of principle, these measures gave rise to fierce argument between the Conservatives, who favoured Protection, and the Liberals, who wanted Free Trade.

The budget was approved by the Conservative majority in the Commons, since it reflected not so much the views of Churchill as those of the Baldwin Government as a whole.

Keynes's predictions were soon borne out. In the summer of 1925 Baldwin was already saying: "All the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet." The bourgeoisie called for a drop in the

standard of living enjoyed by the miners before any other section of the British working class. The miners were supported by several trade unions and the General Council of the Trade Union Congress. The Government and the pit owners were obliged to retreat for the time being, but they began to make determined preparations for the struggle that was to be renewed in 1926, taking the form of a general strike.

In the spring of 1926 the mining employers, backed by the Government, returned to their demand for a cut in miners' pay. During the lengthy negotiations that took place between the Government, the pit owners and the miners, it became apparent that the Government was seeking an open conflict so as to crush the miners, who formed one of the most militant contingents of the British working class, and then force reduced rates of pay on all the country's workers. On the other hand, the trade union leaders, who were opportunists and class collaborators, were afraid of a general strike and tried to settle the dispute through some kind of agreement.

The Communist Party of Great Britain was well aware of the situation that was taking shape, and guessed the intentions of the Baldwin-Churchill Government. It called upon the British working class to pool all its resources in order to fight back against the bloc formed by the Government, the employers and the right-wing opportunist leadership of the trade unions. A statement published in April 1926 by the Central Executive Committee of the British Communist Party said that "the great industrial struggle which it [the Executive Committee] predicted last August, and for which it has urged the workers to prepare, is now at hand, and only the utmost unity and determination on the part of the whole of the Labour movement can avert defeat". The Conservative Government realised that the activities of the Communist Party just before the General Strike presented a considerable threat, and so it took drastic steps. Twelve prominent Communist Party activists were arrested and charged under the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797. They were given prison sentences so that the party would be deprived of its most experienced leaders at the crucial moment in the struggle.

Although the dispute had no direct relation to the Exchequer, Churchill became actively involved in it. As

A.J.P. Taylor concludes, "Churchill was the leader of those who wanted to fight, just as he had been the most aggressive minister against the workers when home secretary before the war.... Fighting was his natural response to any challenge." In the course of the contacts between the Government and the workers' representatives, Churchill tried to frustrate the talks and bring about a situation in which the workers would be obliged to stage a general strike, which could then be crushed.

Some British historians also adduce careerist motives as an explanation for the determined efforts Churchill made during the General Strike. It was clear to everyone that it was a major class confrontation, posing a serious threat to British capitalism. Churchill sought ostentatiously to take the lead in defeating the General Strike, showing thereby that he was more important and necessary to the Establishment during those troubled times than the phlegmatic Baldwin, who only seemed to strive for a quiet life. In this way, Taylor continues, "he may have hoped to oust Baldwin from the supreme position. If so, he failed; instead he implanted in Labour men a distrust of him which lasted until after the outbreak of the Second World War." Ernest Bevin, one of the leaders of the General Strike, was later to make repeated public accusations to the effect that Churchill's last-minute intervention frustrated the agreement that was in sight between the Government and the TUC leaders, and made the General Strike unavoidable.

Britain's first General Strike began on 4 May 1926. In addition to the miners, the strike was joined by all the main sections of the British working class. Not a single paper appeared in London because the printing workers went on strike. With the help of Lord Beaverbrook, Churchill organised an anti-strike publication called the *British Gazette*, printed on the machines of the *Morning Post*. It was full of extremist propaganda against the working class. The General Strike period did much to intensify the hatred that British workers bore for Churchill owing to his many years of struggle against them.

The strike continued to gain strength and would have won the day if the workers had not been betrayed by their leaders. The members of the TUC General Council who headed the strike became increasingly perturbed as the struggle hotted up. They had shown themselves to be hesitant

and unreliable ever since the strike began, and eventually, on 12 May, they called off the General Strike. Disorganised and deceived, the workers abandoned the stoppage. It was only later that they realised they had been betrayed. The miners continued the fight in isolation. They struck for a further seven months, and only deprivation and hunger forced them to return to work. This major action by the British working class, which was the last and most powerful ripple of the postwar revolutionary wave, ended in defeat for the workers. Churchill had been very active in bringing about this reverse.

The end of the General Strike meant that the fate of the miners, who carried on with the struggle, was a foregone conclusion. Prime Minister Baldwin calmly left London for Ault-les-Bains, in France, where he spent his holiday every year. He was followed by Churchill, who travelled to Egypt and Greece. Feeling that he had earned his rest, Churchill sat down to paint the Pyramids and the Parthenon.

The return to power of a Conservative Government was marked by sharply mounting British hostility towards the Soviet Union. The Conservatives aimed to break off the diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR that had been established in 1924. Here too Churchill displayed his tireless energy and undying hatred for the Soviet state. In numerous speeches he made attack after attack on the Bolshevik Party, depicting it as the most dangerous enemy confronting Britain and mankind as a whole. In a speech delivered on 20 June 1926, Churchill said: "If Russian Bolsheviks could only pull down Britain, ruin its prosperity, plunge it into anarchy, obliterate the British Empire as a force in the world, the road would be clear for a general butchery, followed by a universal tyranny of which they would be the heads." Such statements from a member of the British Government about the government of a country with which Britain maintained diplomatic relations were indefensible in international law.

He was indignant that diplomatic relations existed between Britain and the USSR, and that official Soviet representatives were in London.

"I have heard the question asked several times," Churchill said in June 1926, "and it is a perfectly fair question: 'Why do you let them stay here? Why do you not throw them out?'

"I am sure it would give me a great deal of satisfaction if

they were thrown out. Personally, I hope I shall live to see the day when either there will be a civilised Government in Russia or that we shall have ended the present pretence of friendly relations." This statement is thoroughly typical of Churchill and illustrates his basic attitude towards the USSR. In 1926 Churchill was still hoping that "a civilised Government", by which he meant a bourgeois government, could be restored in Russia. He was still prepared to struggle to reintroduce capitalism to the USSR, and wished to break off diplomatic relations as a preliminary step.

As Chancellor, Churchill was obliged to assist the development of trade between Britain and other countries, including the USSR. Britain had a particular interest in this trade during the twenties, when unemployment reached unprecedented levels. Subordinating the country's national interests to his own class interests, Churchill made pronouncements that were designed to undermine trade with the USSR. He officially declared that British subjects who entered into commercial deals with the Soviet Union could not count on British Treasury support, and added: "Should the Government find it necessary at any moment to expel the Soviet agents, no claims for losses will be entertained by the Treasury."

The British Conservative Government organised various anti-Soviet provocations both in Britain and in the states that were adjacent to the Soviet Union. In May 1927 police raided the premises of the Soviet Trade Mission in London and those of the Arcos company, which handled trade between Britain and the USSR. This infringed both the basic principles of international law and the agreements that Britain had concluded with the Soviet Union. On 27 May 1927 the British Government broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR.

The Soviet Government had a clear perception of what lay behind these provocative actions. The British Establishment was trying to involve the capitalist countries in a fresh crusade against the Soviet Union, and was hard at work to fashion an anti-Soviet bloc. Winston Churchill was well to the fore. Speaking in July 1927, he exclaimed: "We have proclaimed them [the Soviet representatives] treacherous, incorrigible, and unfit for civilised intercourse." He tirelessly advocated the setting up of a bloc of imperialist states against the USSR.

Churchill's hostility towards the Soviet Union and the British working class led him along new paths. After painting a few landscapes in Egypt and Greece, he set off in January 1927 for Rome, where he spent several days as the guest of the fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini. The fascist press showered compliments upon Churchill—and for good reason. After Mussolini had fêted Churchill for a week, the British minister held a press conference and sang the praises of Italian fascism.

"You will naturally ask me," Churchill declared to the reporters, "about the interviews I have had with Italian statesmen and, in particular, with Signor Mussolini and Count Volpi [the Italian Finance Minister]. I could not help being charmed, like so many other people have been, by Signor Mussolini's gentle and simple bearing ... anyone could see that he thought of nothing but the lasting good, as he understood it, of the Italian people, and that no lesser interest was of the slightest consequence to him.

"I am sure that I am violating no confidence when I say that a large part of my conversations with Signor Mussolini and with Count Volpi turned upon the economic position of the Italian wage earner.... I was very glad to hear and to have it proved to me by facts and figures that there is a definite improvement month by month over the preceding year."

After voicing his admiration for the corporate state system that the Italian fascists had introduced, Churchill added: "It is quite absurd to suggest that the Italian Government does not rest upon popular bases or that it is not upheld by the active and practical assent of the great masses."

Churchill went on to say that, if he had been an Italian, he would certainly have been a fascist, and he explained why: "If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism." He later added: "I will, however, say a word on an international aspect of fascism. Externally your movement has rendered a service to the whole world.... Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces.... She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter, no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against cancerous growths."

In conclusion, Churchill advanced the idea that "Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany should work together for the revival of Europe and to heal the wounds of the war". This amounted to a suggestion that the four Powers should set up a counter-revolutionary Directorate to ensure success in the struggle against the revolutionary movement. This was probably one of the earliest versions of the plan to establish a four-Power pact, but, at the time, the suggestion had little chance of being put into effect.

Churchill's statement to the Italian press shows, in the words of one of his biographers, "how far his dislike of Bolshevism had led him".

Churchill's liking for Italian fascism was no aberration. It was a natural manifestation of his class political convictions and leanings, resulting from the policies that he had consistently pursued *vis-à-vis* socialism and the working movement over many years. In this respect, he was on the far right of British Conservatism, but he undoubtedly had company. That other people who occupied the commanding heights in Britain shared his view of fascism in Italy is shown by the fact that in 1923, when Mussolini had only just managed to seize power, Britain's King George V conferred on him the Order of the Bath, one of the country's highest orders.

Churchill's admiration for the doings of the Italian fascists and for their leader was to last for a very long time. In September 1935 he referred to Mussolini as "so great a man and so wise a ruler".

Churchill continued during the twenties to alter and improve his country house, Chartwell. He usually spent week-ends out of town. Chartwell was only an hour's drive from London, so that friends could arrive for lunch or tea and still have time to return to London. Lord Beaverbrook, Lord Birkenhead and Lloyd George, whom Churchill regarded as his closest friends, were frequent guests at Chartwell. It has been said that there is no friendship at the top, and this is certainly true of the relationships between Churchill and his friends. They would sometimes act in concert, but were often jealous of one another, and the best of friends were constantly plotting behind the others' backs. Churchill would sit with his visitors long into the small hours, discussing politics endlessly.

By this time he already had four children, of whom he

was very fond. He would spend his leisure time engaged in various building jobs on the estate. This was his latest hobby. With his own hands he built a system of canals from stone and brick, and also created a spacious goldfish pond. He enjoyed masonry work and bricklaying, studying the trade for six hours a day under a professional mason until he had acquired the necessary skills. He built a long wall and a cottage. In 1928, at the invitation of William Joynson-Hicks, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, Churchill joined the union and paid his membership fee of five shillings. For Churchill, it was something of a joke, but union members were not at all amused. The Builders' Union passed a resolution condemning Churchill's membership and stating that it was a "good joke for Winston Churchill but a painful insult to members of the Union". The union refused to accept his five shillings, but, despite this, he retained his union card. Whenever he busied himself with building work, Churchill insisted that his visitors should lend a hand. This was not to everyone's liking.

New Parliamentary elections were held in May 1929, and the Conservatives lost 159 seats. Labour gained more seats than any other party, and the third largest group in the Commons was the Liberals. They were never again to rise above this level. As time passed, so their numbers at Westminster gradually dwindled, and soon they had fewer than ten seats. Churchill stood as a candidate in the Epping constituency. He was elected, but his majority was some 5,000 votes smaller than the one he had received in the 1924 elections.

The Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, accordingly, formed an all-Labour government. As a Conservative, Churchill naturally lost his ministerial post. It was then difficult to imagine that he would now be out of office for ten long years.

Churchill had not yet settled down among the Conservatives once again. He had found no stable position in the party. His standing in the country was very low, and the working masses adopted an uncompromisingly hostile attitude towards him. His actions during the General Strike, the complimentary remarks he had made about the Italian fascists and his wild speeches against the USSR combined to turn public opinion in Britain against him. It cannot be said that Churchill's actions ran counter to the mood of Conserv-

ative extremists, but they were not really happy about Churchill either. His vociferous anti-socialism inflicted political damage on the Conservatives too and turned the masses against the party.

These feelings were communicated to the press, and the papers took a poor view of Churchill. "If he changes his Party with the facility of partners at a dance," one paper commented at the time, "he has always been true to the only Party he really believes in—that which is assembled under the hat of Mr. Winston Churchill.... His life is one long speech. He does not talk. He orates. He will address you at breakfast as though you were an audience at the Free Trade Hall, and at dinner you find the performance still running. If you meet him in the intervals he will give you more fragments of the discourse, walking up and down the room with the absorbed self-engaged Napoleonic portentousness that makes his high seriousness tremble on the verge of the comic. He does not want to hear your views. He does not want to disturb the beautiful clarity of his thought by the tiresome reminders of the other side. What has he to do with the other side when his side is the right side? He is not arguing with you: he is telling you."

Even the calm, composed and sceptically ironical Baldwin found it hard to put up with Churchill. He grew tired of Churchill's inexhaustible energy and constant demonstration of his own superiority. Baldwin was already telling his friends that, if he ever had to form a new government, he would not include Churchill in it, since Churchill's inability to work with other people meant that the advantages of having him in the Government were considerably outweighed by the disadvantages. Baldwin was subsequently to abide by this decision.

The second Labour Government had to operate during the world economic crisis that began in 1929. The crisis reached Britain in the autumn of that year. Industrial production slumped, and the worst hardship faced by the working class during the crisis years was massive unemployment. The Establishment sought salvation in a renewed onslaught against ordinary people's living standards. In 1930 the MacDonald Government steered through Parliament legislation providing for the "means test" and rectifying "anomalies" in the payment of social security benefits, which entailed a reduction in unemployment insurance. This put a

great strain on relations between the Labour leadership and the party's rank-and-file.

The economic crisis was the chief concern of Government and Parliament. Economic problems were, consequently, the focal point of the main Commons debates. Since he was now relieved of his governmental responsibilities, Churchill only had Parliament in which to show his mettle. Unfortunately, he did not take the slightest interest in economic problems. He grew heartily sick of the endless figures that abounded in the speeches made by Government spokesmen and MPs. He confided to his friends that Parliamentary activity had never been as tedious as it was then.

In June 1930 Churchill amazed everyone by suggesting that economics should be divorced from politics. He proposed that, alongside Parliament proper, an economic Parliament, answerable to the Commons should be set up. It would include about a fifth of the MPs and would consist of those who were suitably qualified. No support for the idea was forthcoming.

Churchill was thus obliged to seek fulfilment once again in writing. This was the period in which he wrote the final volume of *The World Crisis*, the autobiographical *My Early Life* and several essays that were later assembled in book form and entitled *Thoughts and Adventures*.

It was not long, however, before Churchill found a political subject for his Parliamentary speeches. The national liberation struggle in India, which had continued unabated ever since the First World War, forced the British authorities in the late twenties to study the question of granting a small group of Indian landowners and members of the bourgeoisie some say in the running of Indian domestic affairs. The Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin (later known as Lord Halifax) submitted proposals to this effect. The Labour Government took a positive view of the proposals, and they were supported by the Liberals and, particularly important, by the Conservatives too. The reason was simple: thinking people in Britain came to realise that it was impossible, in the circumstances of the time, to keep India's millions in servitude merely by force. Such people had taken to heart the lesson of Ireland: although few in numbers, the Irish people had won their freedom, albeit limited, by taking up arms. It was clear to Britain's rulers that, if the people of India rose up in revolt, British domination would be swept

away once and for all. It was therefore necessary to make concessions to the Indian propertied classes by granting some measure of satisfaction to the local landowners and bourgeoisie while preserving British rule over the country.

Baldwin and the majority of the Conservative Party understood the need for these concessions. Churchill did not. He assailed anyone who was prepared to accept the proposed administrative reforms in India. He had to fight his own party leadership, headed by Baldwin, as well as the Labour and Liberal MPs. He delivered numerous, characteristically long speeches both in and out of Parliament, arguing that British rule in India should be retained in its present form and that any changes would be a disaster for Britain and India alike.

Churchill found like-minded people on the right wing of the Conservative Party, and they set up the Indian Empire Society. The group tried to organise resistance to the administrative reform plans, and Churchill was its heart and soul.

Churchill claimed that social order and the progress that was taking place in India were to be explained exclusively in terms of British action. He declared that the Indians could not have attained such a level of development of their own. If granted independence, Churchill said, "India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarisms and privations of the Middle Ages".

For many years, the British colonial authorities managed to sap the strength of the national liberation movement in India by fomenting religious and caste strife. Churchill showed particular zeal in this field during the early thirties. He incited the Moslems against the Hindus and claimed that the Hindus would be unable to defend themselves against the Moslems, since they were, he said, inept in warfare.

The majority of the Conservative Party realised that Churchill's racialist speeches were not only old-fashioned, but also dangerous, since they showed the whole world that British policy was essentially colonialist and encouraged the people of India to conclude that they could only achieve independence from Britain by fighting for it. Baldwin therefore opposed Churchill in no uncertain terms.

When Baldwin was seen to favour certain concessions to the propertied classes of India, Churchill broke off his contacts with him in January 1931 and left the Shadow Cabinet (the leadership of the Parliamentary Opposition

party). The members of this Cabinet criticise the Government, with each person speaking on a particular policy area. If the Opposition party then assumes office, the members of the Shadow Cabinet usually occupy the corresponding ministerial posts. Leopold Amery, a prominent Conservative figure at the time, notes that, after breaking with Baldwin, Churchill "proceeded with furious energy to rally all the elements in the Conservative Party and outside that he could get together to defeat Baldwin".

Churchill saw the struggle as being already a fight for control of the Conservative Party, for the post of leader and, ultimately, for the Prime Minister's chair. The campaign was not altogether hopeless. Some Conservatives were dissatisfied with Baldwin because of his policy towards India. Others were irritated by his procrastination over the introduction of Protection, upon which they insisted. It was these disaffected Conservatives who began to gather around Churchill. In the end, however, Churchill was defeated, and Baldwin retained his post as leader of the Conservative Party.

These developments explain why, in 1931, when Baldwin and MacDonald formed a coalition government, they declined to enlist Churchill's services.

The coalition Government arose on the ruins of the second Labour Government, headed by MacDonald. Under pressure from financial and industrial circles, MacDonald made an attempt, in August 1931, to effect a further cut-back in unemployment benefits, which gave rise to a storm of protest among working people. As a result, the Labour leadership was split, and MacDonald's group sided openly with the bourgeoisie.

The coalition Government established by Baldwin and MacDonald in August 1931 included Conservatives and some Liberals. The Labour defector Ramsay MacDonald stayed on as Prime Minister, but power was really in the hands of Baldwin, who occupied the post of Lord President of the Council. From this time onwards and until the spring of 1945, Britain was ruled by various coalition governments, in which the Conservative element always had the upper hand.

MacDonald, as well as Baldwin, had personal reasons for keeping Churchill at arm's length. Throughout the lifetime of the Labour Government, Churchill had attacked Labour leaders in his usual caustic way. He argued that, while in office, Labour leaders showed themselves totally incapable of

governing the country. Admittedly, this was also claimed by the Conservative Party and by the bourgeois mass media as a whole. However, Churchill's pronouncements on the theme gave personal offence to MacDonald and his colleagues.

Once, Churchill had declared in Parliament: "I remember when I was a child being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the programme which I most desired to see was the one described as 'The Boneless Wonder'. My parents judged that the spectacle would be too revolting and demoralising for my youthful eyes, and I have waited fifty years to see the Boneless Wonder sitting on the Treasury Bench." Churchill was here referring to MacDonald, who really was politically spineless and feeble. Needless to say, though, MacDonald took a rather different view of himself and never forgave Churchill for his offensive remarks.

Thus, the two leaders—both Baldwin and MacDonald—did not wish to see Churchill play any part in government. Since he had no backing from public opinion, he had to be content for many years with being just a Member of Parliament, or, in British terminology, a "back-bencher".

Chapter 8

Awareness of the German Threat

The thirties occupy a special place in British life. Historians call them the "threadbare thirties", the "devil's decade", the "nine troubled years" and so on. In both domestic, and even more so in foreign, policy they certainly were difficult years for Britain.

The coalition Government which came to power in August 1931 further reduced unemployment benefits and also lowered civil service salaries and servicemen's pay. This led to a naval mutiny at Invergordon. Communist-led workers and unemployed staged hunger marches and massive demonstrations which frequently ended in pitched battles with the police. The Establishment intensified its repression against working people, and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie was becoming increasingly rigorous. In 1932 Oswald Mosley founded the British Union of Fascists, and an exceptionally reactionary act on mutiny was passed in 1935.

Free Trade was abandoned very quietly and without fuss. The economic crisis had convinced nearly everyone that Britain needed to shelter behind a wall of protective tariffs. As it happened, the measures ushering in Protection were put into effect by Joseph Chamberlain's son, Neville Chamberlain, who was Chancellor in Baldwin's coalition Government. Instead of defending Free Trade, Churchill himself suggested on 8 September 1931 that Protection should be introduced. In 1931, under pressure from the crisis, the Government

abandoned the Gold Standard, which had been reintroduced in 1925, and in 1932 it effected the transition to Protection and a system of Imperial Preferences.

The thirties were also a difficult time for Winston Churchill. The early years of this "devil's decade" were particularly hard, since it seemed that Churchill had no prospect of returning to active statesmanship. It had become a firmly established habit with Churchill to leave Britain whenever he was out of luck. In the early thirties his luck had certainly run out: despite the return of the Conservatives to power, he had not been offered a government post. On this occasion Churchill set off for the United States, where he had contracted to undertake an extensive lecture tour. The trip was designed not only to distract Churchill from gloomy thoughts about his uncertain political future, but also, as usual, to improve his financial position, which was not so bad anyway. There was one further reason for making the trip. He wanted to see his old friend, the American banker Bernard Baruch, and to consult him on many questions concerning both Churchill's own position and a number of international problems.

Churchill left for America together with his wife and his daughter Diana. In addition to his footman, he was accompanied by a bodyguard—Scotland Yard's Inspector Thompson—who had already attended him before, when he had occupied posts in the Government. Thompson was now attached to him, since Churchill's anti-Indian speeches had given rise to the danger that an attempt might be made on his life by Indian terrorists.

Before his US lecture tour, Churchill took a short holiday in Canada. He travelled across Canada, from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains. As usual on such occasions, he did a great deal of painting and riding, and tried to meet as many influential people in Canadian society as possible. After his holiday, he arrived in New York in fine fettle.

On 14 December he was scheduled to give his first lecture in New York on the subject "The destiny of the English-speaking peoples". On the previous day he was to visit Bernard Baruch, and, for once, the traditional superstition about the unlucky number proved quite justified. When, on 13 December, he set off to have lunch with Baruch, he had an accident. He forgot that in New York cars do not travel on the left-hand side of the road, as in London, but on the right.

He got out of his car, looked to the right, saw that the road was clear and began to walk across Fifth Avenue, where Baruch lived. At that moment, he heard a screech of brakes and felt a heavy blow. He was thrown into the air by the bonnet of a car and fell unconscious on to the asphalt. He was found to have suffered 15 broken bones, internal bleeding had started, and he had incurred numerous abrasions as well. Despite the violent blow, Churchill soon regained consciousness and later had a clear recollection of being taken to hospital in an ambulance.

His first few minutes in hospital were rather unpleasant. Lenox-hill Hospital was a private establishment, and it was the doctor's prime concern to enquire whether his bleeding patient would be able to pay the bill for the course of treatment. Churchill was in excruciating pain, but he somehow managed to prove his credit-worthiness and so eventually reached the operating table.

He began to recover just a few days later. He readily acknowledged that he was responsible for the accident, and saw to it that the driver of the taxi that had knocked him down did not get into trouble. Incidentally, unlike some of his colleagues, Mario Contasino, an Italian American, did not speed away from the scene as quickly as possible, but did everything he could to help the victim. Needless to say, photographs of Churchill and the driver, who came to see him and expressed his condolences, found their way into many American newspapers.

The incident created a sensation, and Thompson was hard put to eject from Churchill's ward the American journalists who had managed to penetrate that far under various pretexts. Churchill still felt weak and was in no mood for interviews. In any case, he decided to extract the maximum benefit from the mishap. As soon as he was in a fit state to dictate, he sold the American *Collier's* magazine an article about his Adventures in New York, which was later reprinted in nearly every American paper. The article not only netted $2,560 for Churchill (which was enough to pay for a three-week holiday with his companions in the Bahamas once he had left hospital), but was also splendid publicity for his forthcoming lecture tour.

It was a generally successful tour, apart from the trouble caused by certain groups that had taken exception to his position on the Indian question. Thompson writes that

Churchill handed over to the American police about 700 threatening letters. Quite often, when arriving in a new town, Churchill would notice that a demonstration was going on against his visit. His car was twice stoned in Detroit. According to Inspector Thompson, there was even an attempt on his life in Chicago. Churchill describes himself as "living all day on my back in a railway compartment, and addressing in the evening large audiences.... I lay pretty low all through this year; but in time my strength returned."

Upon his return from his American journey, Churchill busied himself with another major piece of writing. He often said that, for him, literary work meant consolation in misfortune, relaxation and genuine pleasure. In the thirties he sought this consolation and pleasure in his six-volume *Life of Marlborough (Marlborough. His Life and Times)*. Ever since he was a boy, Winston had admired John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough. War, revolution, counter-revolution, intrigue, great danger and love had all featured in his life, and it seemed good material for an interesting book. Over the years, Churchill had read everything that had ever been written about his illustrious ancestor, and so he had a perfect knowledge of his life. Blenheim Palace contained a vast quantity of documents that John Churchill had left behind and which no historian had ever set eyes on. Nevertheless, Churchill hesitated for a long time before starting the biography. He was deterred by the fact that John had been a complicated and contradictory character. He was certainly a hero, but his brilliant achievements had been tarnished by accusations of bribery and treason.

It was common knowledge that he had risen because he had the backing of King James II. However, when the King attempted to turn England into a Catholic country and to become an absolute monarch, John Churchill betrayed him and helped William of Orange to ascend the English throne. James had to flee to France. It was uncertain which of them would win in the end, and, when William was organising an attack on the French fleet, which was based in Brest, John informed James of the impending operation. Some historians say that he did this so as to earn James's favour once again, just in case he were to be restored to the throne. Others claim that, by betraying the plan of campaign to the enemy, John sought to bring about the failure of the English commander of the operation and hence facilitate his own promotion. All

this was rather unsavoury, and Winston Churchill took a long time to decide whether it was worth writing a biography of his famous ancestor. Having eventually decided to undertake the task, he intended from the outset to give battle to his predecessors in an attempt to rehabilitate the first Duke of Marlborough.

The job was no easy one, and Churchill spent a good deal of time on preparatory work. As usual, he enlisted a number of assistants to study the archives at Blenheim Palace as well as suitable repositories in London and Paris, and selected the necessary documents. Naval and military experts helped him to recreate the battles fought by his ancestor. However, while drawing on the services of his assistants, Churchill did not necessarily wish to share their conclusions on important points. Consequently, he would himself analyse and collate the evidence they had assembled, would discuss it with specialists and would eventually come to a conclusion that was generally his own. In the summer of 1932 he visited the Netherlands and Germany, where the battles that brought fame to John Churchill had been fought.

Churchill began writing his *Life of Marlborough* in 1933. He carefully pursued a twofold aim: firstly, to refute the accusations that historians had levelled against John Churchill and, secondly, to glorify his forebear as much as possible.

The first two volumes of the *Life of Marlborough* are mainly devoted to arguments between the author and the great English historian Lord Macaulay. There was certainly plenty to argue about. Macaulay had accused John Churchill of some very dubious practices right at the outset of his political career. Macaulay wrote that John "levied ample contributions on ladies enriched by the spoils of more liberal lovers. He was, during a short time, the object of the violent but fickle fondness of the Duchess of Cleveland. On one occasion he was caught with her by the King, and was forced to leap out of the window. She rewarded this hazardous feat of gallantry with a present of £5,000. With this sum the prudent young hero instantly bought an annuity of £500 a year, well secured on landed property." Elsewhere Macaulay notes that John Churchill "subsisted upon the infamous wages bestowed upon him by the Duchess of Cleveland". He writes: "All the precious gifts which nature had lavished upon him he valued chiefly for what they would fetch." "At twenty," according to Macaulay, "he made money of his

beauty and his vigour; at sixty he made money of his genius and his glory."

The author of the *Life of Marlborough* was in a difficult position. His only answer to Macaulay's charges was to point to the fact that John married Sarah Jennings for love rather than for her dowry, since she was a relatively poor match financially. It was a feeble argument, and, in the end, Churchill was nevertheless obliged to admit that his ancestor had benefited from the patronage of the man who had taken his sister as a mistress, that he himself had taken money from his mistresses and had invested it, that he had betrayed King James while he was in his service and occupied an important post, and that he kept up a correspondence with the enemies of William of Orange.

Winston was very unhappy about the charges of treason against John Churchill. He made strenuous efforts to show that the charges on one point were unfounded. He claimed that the letter, supposedly written by John Churchill, which betrayed to the French the operation that was being prepared against their fleet, was a forgery. Even if one accepts at face value the arguments on this point that the book presents, they still do not put Marlborough fully in the clear. Churchill nevertheless ventured to accuse Macaulay of simply lying. "We can only hope," he wrote, "that Truth will follow swiftly enough to fasten the label 'Liar' to his genteel coat-tails." This was going too far, and Professor George Trevelyan, the well-known British historian, published a letter on 19 October 1933 rebuking him.

Although unsuccessful in his attempt to challenge the accusations levelled by Macaulay and other critics of the first Duke of Marlborough, Churchill has created a magnificent monument to his forebear. He unfolds before the reader the broad canvas of the historical events of the time. He draws vivid portraits of many of the statesmen who were John Churchill's contemporaries. The splendid literary style of the *Life of Marlborough* has led a number of Churchill's biographers—wrongly, we would say—to compare his work with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

For Churchill, the biography of the Duke of Marlborough was a dramatic story about the relentless struggle for power. The struggle takes place between the ruling houses of England, on the battlefields of Europe and in the courts of the European monarchs. The struggle for power seems to

Churchill to be the essence of the historical process. He takes the view that England's struggle against France, during which his ancestor gained both glory and money, predetermined the course of European history for many years ahead. Churchill sees the events of that period as presenting convincing arguments in favour of the "balance of power" policy that Britain had pursued for several centuries. Churchill's biographers point out that his work on the *Life of Marlborough* did much to extend his knowledge of European political and military history.

While he was busy with the book, Churchill's Parliamentary duties were light. At first, his Commons speeches were confined to the problem of India. In 1931, when the Government faced a vote of confidence over its Indian policy, Churchill once again opposed granting self-government and dominion status to India. The Commons remained unperturbed by his attemtps to frighten Parliament and the whole country with the terrible consequences that might follow from a reform of the Indian administration. Churchill writes that he managed to win the support of just over 40 MPs. At that time, all three Parliamentary parties favoured governmental reforms in India. Subsequently, Churchill was able to rally up to 70 Conservatives, together with whom he founded the group known as the India Defence League, which opposed the Government's Indian policy for four years. The League's activities were financed by the Indian princes.

Here too, for Churchill, it was not just a matter of the destiny of India. If his view prevailed, it would be a defeat for Baldwin. This, in turn, as A.J.P. Taylor points out, would enable him to "drive Baldwin from the leadership of the Conservative party". However, Churchill's efforts were unsuccessful. They simply deepened the gulf that separated him from Baldwin. "Churchill acknowledged defeat," Taylor writes. "He had estranged the Conservatives and had also deepened the profound hostility which practically all Labour men felt towards him. In 1935 he seemed a man without a future."

Churchill's career might well have ended at this point if he had not then suddenly switched his attention to the danger that was increasingly threatening Britain from Germany, which had raised the banner of revenge once the Nazis had come to power. Churchill's pronouncements on the

subject over the years helped him to refurbish his reputation.

In the mid-thirties the place that India had occupied in Churchill's speeches was taken over by Germany. British statesmen were by then well aware that Germany was secretly rearming in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. When the Nazis, demanding revenge and a new war, came to power in Germany, many people in Britain began to wonder about the threat that this posed to British interests in Europe. It was a subject that was coming to preoccupy Churchill too.

In the summer of 1932, when Churchill was visiting the Duke of Marlborough's old battlefields, he closely followed the events that were taking place in Germany. "As we wended our way through these beautiful regions from one ancient, famous city to another," he writes, "I naturally asked questions about the Hitler Movement, and found it the prime topic in every German mind. I sensed a Hitler atmosphere."

In all fairness to Churchill, it must be said that he realised that the resurgence of German militarism encouraged by the Nazis was a threat—and a deadly one at that—not only to the revolutionary movement and the Soviet Union, but also to the interests of Britain.

In the foreign policy sphere, the Great Powers were then devoting a great deal of attention to the disarmament conference in Geneva. The Soviet Union had submitted a clear-cut programme of general disarmament, the adoption of which could help to diminish the threat of war and would ease the tax burden on working people. The British Government, which was hard-pressed by the pacifist views that were then quite strong in Britain, was obliged to play for time. It paid lip-service to disarmament, but did everything in its power to frustrate acceptance of the Soviet proposal. Britain tabled a counter-programme, which aimed to preserve her own armaments largely intact, while depleting the arsenals of the other countries involved.

Some British leaders thought that Germany should be granted "equality in weapons", which was, incidentally, being demanded by the Nazis. Churchill realised what lay behind this demand. In April 1933 he said: "The Germans demand equality in weapons and equality in the organisation of armies and fleets.... It is a most dangerous demand to make. Nothing in life is eternal, but as surely as Germany

acquires full military equality with her neighbours while her own grievances are still unredressed and while she is in the temper which we have unhappily seen, so surely should we see ourselves within a measurable distance of the renewal of general European war."

The acts of the German Government, which was headed from January 1933 onwards by the Nazi Führer, Adolf Hitler, fully justified Churchill's views. The British disarmament plan, the McDonald Plan, was not to the liking of the Germans, and at the end of 1933 they walked out of the disarmament conference and left the League of Nations.

The British Government realised that a new and major war was in the offing. When, in 1919, the Cabinet had wished to cut back government spending, it had informed its military establishments to proceed from the supposition that in the next ten years Britain would not take part in any major war. In 1927 the principle had been extended for a further ten years. However, in 1932 the British Government concluded that the "ten years without war" formula was no longer relevant, and so abandoned it.

When the disarmament conference collapsed, Churchill felt that he now had a free hand, and, instead of campaigning against Britain's possible disarmament, he began to fight for her urgent rearmament. Unlike many British statesmen and military leaders, Churchill formed an accurate appraisal of the importance of hardware in 20th-century warfare. While the battles were raging in France during the First World War, he had done a great deal to build, manufacture and use tanks. In the thirties his attention focused on the Air Force. He took the view that Britain's potential enemy was Germany. Since Britain was separated from Western Europe by a formidable barrier of water, the English Channel, she had most to fear from German aircraft. Churchill kept track of the development of Germany's Luftwaffe and strove to see that the Royal Air Force was quickly modernised.

Churchill's Commons speeches on the issue are some of his most rational and successful pronouncements. They show how well informed he was both about what was happening in Germany and about the state of British armaments. He carefully collected information about Anglo-German relations and about the state of both countries' armaments. He came to be on good terms with a number of high-ranking officials in the War Office and the Foreign Office. Churchill

was a prominent political figure, and so a number of French politicians kept in touch with him. He also had connections in Berlin. Moreover, he received a good deal of valuable information from Frederick Lindemann, Professor of Experimental Physics at Oxford. Lindemann was an expert in military equipment, and he and Churchill became particularly close in 1932. The professor would often drive down from Oxford and stay with Churchill at Chartwell. He became Churchill's chief consultant on the scientific problems of modern warfare, particularly anti-aircraft defences, and on all matters connected with statistics of one sort or another. Churchill's fruitful collaboration with Lindemann lasted throughout the thirties and during the Second World War.

Another friend of Churchill's was Desmond Morton. Churchill had met Morton in July 1917, when, as Minister of Munitions, he visited the headquarters of the British Commander-in-Chief in Europe, whom Morton was then serving as adjutant. In 1919, when Churchill had become Secretary for War, he appointed Morton to an important intelligence post, which he continued to occupy for many years. Morton lived very near Chartwell, and so he often visited Churchill and discussed state affairs with him.

Several French ministers met Churchill during visits to Britain and discussed international problems with him. He also had ties with British correspondents in Paris and Berlin, and they too acted as a source of information. What was more, he maintained good relations with prominent people who had been forced by the Nazi reign of terror to leave Germany and settle in Britain.

Newspapers contain a fair amount of information on matters of foreign policy, and the suitably prepared reader can cull valuable facts from them. For this reason, the press comes in for close scrutiny by intelligence services. Churchill was able to extract considerably more than many other people from newspapers, since he had occupied many government posts and so was familiar with what went on behind the scenes. This helped him to filter out the most valuable facts and to discard idle journalistic gossip.

Consequently, Churchill was very well informed, and, as Virginia Cowles remarks, "Chartwell became a little Foreign Office of its own". The members of the Government were, of course, no less well informed than Churchill, but they did not possess his ability to analyse the situation. It is this that

explains the persuasiveness of the speeches that Churchill made in the thirties on British rearmament and the threat from Germany.

Churchill's speeches on British policy on the eve of the Second World War were published as a book, entitled *While England Slept.* The book produced a great effect on the Anglo-Saxon elite. The American Ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, urged his 23-year-old son, John, to write his university thesis on the subject "Appeasement at Munich". John Kennedy set to work enthusiastically and, drawing on his father's advice and material at the US Embassy in London, wrote his thesis. He followed Churchill's principal ideas and tried to develop them. His father thought it a good piece of work, and it was decided to publish it. Arthur Krock of *The New York Times* lent a hand, and John Kennedy's book, entitled *Why England Slept,* appeared shortly before the Battle of Britain (1940) and sold out quickly.

Churchill never tired of stressing the magnitude of the threat posed by the Luftwaffe. He said that once "the Navy was the 'sure shield' of Britain.... We cannot say that now. This cursed, hellish invention and development of war from the air has revolutionised our position. We are not the same kind of country we used to be when we were an island, only twenty years ago."

In 1934 the British Government took a number of steps to increase its strength in the air. Parliamentary discussion of the measures enabled Churchill to reiterate his arguments. "No country," he said, "is so vulnerable and no country would better repay pillage than our own.... *With our enormous metropolis here, the greatest target in the world, a kind of tremendous, fat, valuable cow tied up to attract the beast of prey,* we are in a position in which we have never been before, and in which no other country is at the present time....

I first assert that Germany has already, in violation of the Treaty, created *a military air force which is now nearly two-thirds as strong as our present home defence air force. By the end of 1935, the German air force will be nearly equal in numbers and efficiency to our home defence air force at that date even if the Government's present proposals are carried out.*"

In November 1934 Churchill moved an amendment to the King's speech opening the new Parliamentary session,

declaring that "the strength of our national defences, and especially of our air defences, is no longer adequate to secure the peace, safety, and freedom of Your Majesty's faithful subjects". He stated that Germany already possessed an air force, and added that, if it were to develop at its current rate, it would be at least as strong as the RAF by that time the following year, and maybe even stronger. If Britain and Germany continued with their existing military programmes, the German military air force would be nearly 50% stronger than the RAF by the end of 1936, and almost twice as strong in 1937, he concluded.

Baldwin rejected Churchill's forecasts. He declared that, "far from *the German military air force being at least as strong as, and probably stronger than, our own, we estimate that we shall still have a margin in Europe alone of nearly fifty per cent.* I cannot look farther forward than the next two years."

Just six months later, Baldwin had to acknowledge publicly that Churchill had been right. On 22 May 1935 Baldwin declared: "*Where I was wrong was in my estimate of the future. There I was completely wrong. We were completely misled on that subject.*" He admitted that the Government bore full responsibility for the error: "*That responsibility is not that of any single Minister; it is the responsibility of the Government as a whole, and we are all responsible, and we are all to blame.*"

Baldwin's frank admission met with the approval of the Commons and public opinion, as did the fact that he declined to shift the blame on to any individual minister. What was more, the position he adopted had a negative effect on Churchill, who had, after all, been more or less right. Conservatives were resentful that Churchill had pilloried their leader before the whole country and put him on to the defensive.

In the summer of 1935 the British Government formed a secret committee to take charge of air defence research. Baldwin invited Churchill to become a member. Churchill agreed, but stipulated that he reserved the right to criticise the Government, since he was dissatisfied with British preparations for war in the air. Baldwin accepted this reservation and also agreed to Churchill's demand that Professor Lindemann should be included in the technical subcommittee.

Churchill attended the meetings of the committee for four years and so was able to receive official information about the country's air defences. He discussed the matter constantly with Lindemann, who supplied him with additional material and helped him to draft new proposals.

In the summer of 1935 international attention was drawn to the small independent African country of Abyssinia. A number of imperialist states, and particularly fascist Italy, had designs on the country. With tacit consent from the Governments of Britain and France, Mussolini made preparations for a war against Abyssinia in order to invade the country and turn it into an Italian colony. It was a cynical act of aggression that outraged world opinion and the British people.

Churchill's position in relation to the aggression was clearly sympathetic towards the fascist dictator. He declared that his position was largely prompted by the wish to avoid aggravating Italy, so that she would not be driven into the clutches of Germany.

Naturally, Churchill could not formally suggest that there should be no reaction at all to Italy's intention of invading Abyssinia. Support of this kind for the fascist aggressor would be too blatant. He therefore advanced the idea that Britain should not take the initiative in the matter, but should follow the other Powers if they agreed to take any measures on behalf of Abyssinia within the framework of the League of Nations. He subsequently wrote in his memoirs: "There seemed in all the circumstances no obligation upon Britain to take the lead herself. She had a duty to take account of her own weakness."

The United States was not a member of the League of Nations at the time, France increasingly followed in the wake of British foreign policy, and so Britain played the leading role in the League. The practical effect of Churchill's proposal was to block any action the League might take to defend the victim of aggression.

The British Foreign Secretary at the time, Samuel Hoare, was a man of extremely reactionary views and pro-fascist leanings. Noticing that Churchill supported the Government line, Hoare established closer contacts with him. In August 1935 he invited Churchill and the Liberal and Labour leaders to the Foreign Office in order to discuss the Abyssinian question. Hoare asked Churchill to what extent he thought

Italy's aggression agains Abyssinia should be resisted. "We had an easy talk," Churchill recalls. "I said I thought the Foreign Secretary was *justified in going as far with the League of Nations against Italy as he could carry France*; but I added that he ought not to put any pressure upon France.... I did not expect France would go very far.... Generally I strongly advised the Ministers not to try to take a leading part or to put themselves forward too prominently." The uncharacteristic restraint and modesty shown by Churchill can only be explained by his wish not to interfere with the plans of the Italian fascists.

The Government, which was by then headed by Baldwin (MacDonald having moved to the lesser post of Lord President of the Council), agreed with Churchill in principle, but adopted a more flexible line, since it had to take account of the feelings of the British people. Churchill himself recalls: "Bloodshed in Abyssinia, hatred of Fascism ... produced a convulsion within the British Labour Party.... A very strong desire to fight the Italian Dictator, to enforce Sanctions of a decisive character, and to use the British Fleet, if need be, surged through the sturdy wage-earners. Rough and harsh words were spoken at excited meetings."

Baldwin could not turn a blind eye to the situation, and so he staged a piece of political shadow-boxing. On 24 August 1935 the British Government declared that Britain would fulfil her obligations in accordance with the treaties she had signed and with the Charter of the League of Nations, i.e. she would support Abyssinia. Churchill was at a loss. After his conversations at the Foreign Office this was a totally unexpected move by the Government. Later, in September, Samuel Hoare stated in Geneva at the League of Nations Assembly that Britain favoured collective measures to support the League Charter, as well as collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. Churchill did not like this at all. On 1 October 1935 he wrote to Austen Chamberlain: "It would be a terrible deed to smash up Italy, and it will cost us dear.... I do not think we ought to have taken the lead in such a vehement way." Later in October the League of Nations decided, with British support, to enforce economic sanctions against the Italian aggressor. All these developments were given much publicity in the British press—and for good reason.

Here was the Government supporting the victims of

aggression and favouring the use of the League of Nations in order to muzzle the aggressor, and this pleased the British people. The standing of Baldwin's Cabinet soared instantly. A wily politician, Badwin decided to cash in on the favourable political situation that he had himself created in order to hold a general election and ensure a Conservative victory.

The elections took place that same month, October 1935. The Labour Party had still not recovered from the blow it had sustained in 1931, when MacDonald and several other leaders defected to the Conservative camp. The Conservatives presented a demagogical programme which talked of the need for measures to combat unemployment and to boost housing construction. They pledged to support the principles of collective security and to strengthen the League of Nations. The Conservatives duly triumphed at the polls, securing 432 seats in Parliament. Labour won 154 seats. The Parliament that was elected in 1935 lasted for ten years, since in 1939, when its term of office was due to expire, the outbreak of the Second World War prevented the holding of fresh elections.

Churchill attempted during the elections to draw closer to the Conservative leadership. He needed a reconciliation with the party leaders for two reasons: firstly, so as to win in the election with party backing and thus to keep his parliamentary seat for a further term; secondly, so as to have some chance of receiving a ministerial portfolio during the post-electoral Government reshuffle.

Churchill once again campaigned in the Epping constituency. He had by then understood the game Baldwin was playing and so he too called for sanctions against fascist Italy—the feelings of the electorate did have to be considered.

He was re-elected. Immediately afterwards he made the following statement: "I take it from your vote, in view of the speeches I have made, that you desire me to exercise my independent judgement as a Member of Parliament, and, in accordance with the highest traditions of that House, to give the fruits of my knowledge and experience freely and without fear." This was a warning to the voters that in Parliament he would not act in accordance with his electoral promises, but in the way that he thought best. It may also be conjectured that the statement was intended for Baldwin's consumption, so that he should not imagine that Churchill had been converted into a staunch supporter of the League of

Nations and of resistance to all aggressors. This was probably a relevant warning, since after the elections a new government had to be formed.

Churchill ardently desired a post in the Government. The situation appeared to be shaping up in such a way that his inclusion in the Government was not just a pipe-dream. The argument over the policy to be adopted towards India, which had led to Churchill's breaking with Baldwin and to his departure from the Shadow Cabinet, was a thing of the past. By then the Bill reforming the Indian administration had been passed, and there was nothing more to argue about. Churchill recalls that a suitable vacancy had, moreover, appeared in the Government. "It was understood," he writes, "that the Admiralty would be vacant, and I wished very much to go there should the Conservatives be returned to power."

While the electoral campaign was in progress, Baldwin refrained from commenting on the matter. As soon as the results were known, however, he diclared that he had not the slightest intention of including Churchill in the Government. Baldwin knew how to bide his time and to select the right moment for actions. If he had made the announcement during the campaign, Churchill would probably have caused him a lot of trouble and might have jeopardised the Conservative victory. But now, offended and angry though he was, Churchill was quite harmless. As he himself writes, he sought consolation in travel through Spain and North Africa: "I set out with my paint-box for more genial climes without waiting for the meeting of Parliament."

After winning the election, Baldwin and his Government showed their true attitude towards Italian aggression in Africa. The British Government supported only those sanctions against Italy that would not prevent her from invading Abyssinia. "Under the guidance of Britain and the pressures of Laval," Churchill was later to write, "the League of Nations Committee charged with devising sanctions kept clear of any that would provoke war." Here, he is guilty of exaggeration: Mussolini would not have risked going to war if effective sanctions had been employed against him, notably the cutting off of oil supplies to Italy and a ban on her ships using the Suez Canal. Elsewhere Churchill himself admits this: "Mussolini would never have dared to come to grips with a resolute British Government. Nearly the whole of the world

was against him, and he would have had to risk his regime upon a single-handed war with Britain." In general, Churchill comments, "Mussolini's bluff succeeded, and an important spectator drew far-reaching conclusions from the fact." The spectator was Hitler.

In December 1935 Samuel Hoare and the French Prime Minister, Pierre Laval, reached an agreement whereby a part of Abyssinia would be ceded to Italy. This attempt to appease the aggressor at the expense of his victim gave rise to a storm of protest in Britain. The Baldwin Government wavered. Churchill, who was then in Barcelona, immediately wondered whether he should return to Britain and make use of the Government's weakness in order to organise a campaign against it. If the attack succeeded, it might force Baldwin to relent and to include Churchill in the Government. The greatest possible success would be the overthrow of the Cabinet and the formation of a new government in which Churchill would participate.

However, Churchill's friends tried to dissuade him from making yet another attack on Baldwin. They argued that he might only do damage to himself if he tried to play on the Government's difficulties over Abyssinia. Much against his will, Churchill was prevailed upon to take their advice. More than 20 years later, he was to doubt the wisdom of that decision. "Looking back, I think I ought to have come home," he wrote. "I might have brought an element of decision and combination to the Baldwin régime. Perhaps a Government under Sir Austen Chamberlain might have been established at this moment."

It is hard to agree with Churchill's view. No attempt of his to make capital from the crisis caused by the Hoare-Laval pact would have been successful. He had not enough followers to support him in a difficult struggle with Baldwin. He would have had to fight from an extremely unfavourable political standpoint. He would have had to attack the Government's Abyssinian policy, whereas in fact he approved of it, and the members of the Government were perfectly well aware of this. What was more, they had letters from Churchill saying just that. In addition, his attacks on the Government over that issue would inevitably have set the whole or most of the Conservative Party against him, and without the support of most of the party a new government could not have been formed, since the Conservatives had a

majority in the Commons.

Churchill was soon to find another occasion for attacking the hated Baldwin.

The year 1936 saw the death of King George V. By British standards, he was an ideal constitutional monarch, having set an example of conservative respectability in both public and private life. The heir to the throne, the Prince of Wales, became the new King, Edward VIII.

Edward VIII was an unusual British monarch. It is well known that in Britain the King reigns, but does not rule. This state of affairs was not to the liking of Edward VIII. He thought that the King should play a more active role, the role that he had mastered while still the heir-apparent. As Prince of Wales, he had visited mining areas, had studied social matters and had made statements intended to demonstrate his sympathy for ordinary working people and their hardships, as well as his readiness to do something to improve their lot. This broke with tradition, but the Establishment used the future King's statements in order to publicise him among the people as a democrat. In whis way, they tried to reinforce monarchist feeling among the British people and to enhance the prestige of the monarchy.

When, after ascending the throne, Edward VIII tried to play an even more active part, instead of becoming quieter, this slowly but surely gave rise to growing irritation within the Government. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, drafted a memorandum criticising the King's actions and urging him to "settle down". Never a man to do things in a hurry, Baldwin shelved the document. Soon, however, the King himself enabled Baldwin to put him in his place.

At the age of 41, Edward VIII was still a bachelor. He decided to marry an attractive American lady, Wallis Warfield Simpson. It was already a long-standing rule for British aristocrats to marry rich Americans, thereby buttressing their shaky financial positions. Cynics claim that these marriages improved the physical state of many degenerating aristocratic families, as well as their finances. The Churchill family seems to illustrate this. This time, however, it was a question of the King, and this radically altered the situation.

Edward VIII's interest in Wallis Simpson was motivated by love rather than money. To make matters worse, she was not one of the untitled American aristocracy, nor was she even

the daughter of some millionaire. But, worst of all, before meeting the King of England, she had already been twice married. Her first husband, whom she had divorced, was still alive, while the divorce from the second, Ernest Simpson, had still not been granted.

The relationship between Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson had been going on for quite a long time. Many people knew about it, but the situation gave rise to no negative reaction against the King. Throughout 1936 the King and Mrs. Simpson appeared together quite openly and frequently. The British press kept silent on the subject. It is the rule in Britain that newspapers do not publish anything that might disparage the monarchy. But the sensation-mongering American press portrayed the King of England's private life in lurid colours.

The situation changed when Edward VIII declared his intention of marrying Mrs. Simpson as soon as her divorce proceedings were completed. The two lovers regarded the idea as being perfectly feasible. Edward VIII knew very well, if only from the example set by his predecessor Edward VII, that even in court circles morality was very flexible. He imagined that he would be able to draw a hard and fast line between his official functions and his private life, which he thought should be the concern of no one but himself.

However, the King misjudged the feelings of the Establishment and failed to take into account the fact that they regarded his actions as undermining the prestige of the monarchy in the eyes of the people. Since the British monarchy is closely bound up with the Church, the King's behaviour inevitably drew forth objections from that quarter too.

On 27 October 1936 Mrs. Simpson obtained her divorce, and so there was no impediment to the marriage. Certain that the King intended to marry Mrs. Simpson, Baldwin decided to call the King to order. He asked the monarch to choose between Mrs. Simpson and the throne. A hidden but fierce struggle ensued between the British Prime Minister and Mrs. Simpson, who demanded that the marriage should take place at all costs. Her single-mindedness probably helped to advance Baldwin's cause. The King was living at Windsor Castle, one of his country residences. Baldwin called on him

several times and tried to dissuade him from his matrimonial intentions. After lengthy conversations, the Prime Minister seemed to have achieved his objective, and Edward VIII was ready to give in. But, as soon as Baldwin had left, the King would drive down to London, where he would meet Mrs. Simpson. He would then return to Windsor, firmly resolved to go through with the marriage.

The crisis was not long in surfacing. The Bishop of Bradford, Alfred Blunt, publicly condemned the King's behaviour. Baldwin was obliged to present a summary of the issue to Parliament. The hullabaloo over this juicy piece of gossip continued to grow. The discussion of the King's conduct was accompanied by a great deal of hypocrisy. Emrys Hughes, one of Churchill's biographers, writes that "no English king had ever contemplated marrying a twice-divorced American woman before. They had their mistresses and their illegitimate children, but there had been nothing illegal or constitutionally wrong in this. Indeed, if king Edward had decided to make Mrs. Simpson his mistress without marrying her, it is unlikely that either the Prime Minister or the Archbishop of Canterbury could or would have dared to mention the matter publicly, and there would have been a tacit general agreement to keep the scandal hushed up."

Winston Churchill saw his chance in the conflict between Baldwin and the King. He decided to support the King, to rally around himself people who sympathised with the King in his difficult situation and also people who were opposed to Baldwin, and to try to unseat the Prime Minister. The King was informed that Churchill was prepared to support him, and he decided to make use of his services. Edward VIII told Baldwin that he wanted advice from Churchill. It is said that the Prime Minister did not object to the meeting between the King and his old enemy. There can be no doubt, however, that Churchill's intrusion into the dispute only strengthened the determination of Baldwin and other members of the Government to pursue the matter to the bitter end. Churchill's participation in the conflict showed that the King intended to mount a struggle against Baldwin which, if successful, would inevitably entail Baldwin's removal from power in favour of his rival.

Churchill had influential allies. First and foremost, there were the press barons Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook, who used their papers to campaign for Edward VIII's

being allowed to contract a morganatic marriage. They claimed that some 60 MPs were ready to support the government that might be formed instead of the Baldwin Government. It was even rumoured that a "Royalist Party" of sorts was to be founded.

In his public pronouncements in support of the King, Churchill demanded that the Government should not act hastily, that it should give the King ample time to ponder the matter, that no pressure should be brought to bear on him and that Parliament should be enabled to deal with the matter properly. What Churchill needed most of all was time, so that he could enlist the support of all those whom he could recruit, and so as to mobilise public opinion against Baldwin. He tried to frighten the Establishment by saying that, if the King were forced to abdicate, this "would inflict an injury upon the constitutional position of the monarchy ... irrespective of the existing occupant of the Throne". He claimed that the abdication of Edward VIII "would cast its shadow forward across many chapters of the history of the British Empire". Churchill appealed to the feelings of his far-flung audience, emphasising the personal and human aspect of the problem.

"If Winston's plea for time and prayer had been acceded to," writes Emrys Hughes, "it is quite likely that a press campaign might have been whipped up in the King's favour, for Baldwin and Archbishop Lang were not by any stretch of the imagination overpopular. Perhaps they realised that the sooner the abdication was over and done with the better."

Baldwin understood that it was necessary to hurry, and he stepped up his pressure on the King. On 7 December the Prime Minister made a carefully worded statement in Parliament, saying that the King was making up his mind about what to do. Churchill immediately rose and reiterated his demand that no irrevocable step should be taken before the Government made a formal statement on the issue to Parliament. This attempt to enable Parliament to debate the issue failed. Churchill's request was greeted by loud cries of "No" and "Sit down". He had not expected such unanimous resistance and indignation. He was opposed by Liberals and Labour men, as well as Conservatives.

A.J.P. Taylor writes that "Churchill made every possible blunder during the crisis. He misjudged public opinion or the skill of those who manipulated it; he counted wrongly on the

king's resolution; he was shouted down in the house of commons. He had grasped at any means to overthrow Baldwin and his government of feeble men. Instead, the gates of power seemed to close against Churchill for ever. It was now his turn to be a broken man." Churchill himself understood this clearly. Subsequently he recalled that his "influence at that time had fallen to zero".

Edward VIII preferred marriage to the woman he loved to the royal throne. He abdicated and left England. The title of Duke of Windsor was conferred upon him, but his wife was refused leave to be addressed as "Your Royal Highness". From then onwards the Duke of Windsor and his wife lived mainly in France, finding solace in their personal happiness.

In the mid-thirties Churchill formed a definite opinion as to the policy that Britain should pursue towards Germany. An important post in the Foreign Office was then occupied by Robert Vansittart, an intelligent and far-sighted official, who appreciated more clearly than most the threat to Britain's interests that was posed by a vengeful Germany. Contact with Vansittart undoubtedly helped Churchill to formulate a generally accurate view of the question. As he himself said, "far away are the days of Locarno, when we nourished bright hopes of the reunion of the European family"—under the hegemony of Britain, of course.

At a meeting of the Conservative members' Committee on Foreign Affairs at the end of March 1936, Churchill spelled out the principles of British foreign policy towards Europe which he had held for many years and continued to hold, by and large, until his death. "For four hundred years," he said, "the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a Power. Viewed in the light of history, these four centuries of consistent purpose amid so many changes of names and facts, of circumstances and conditions, must rank as one of the most remarkable episodes which the records of any race, nation, State, or people can show. Moreover, on all occasions England took the more difficult course. Faced by Philip II of Spain, against Louis XIV under William III and Marlborough against Napoleon, against William II or Germany, it would have been easy and must have been very tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of his conquest. However, we always took the

combination among them, and thus defeated and frustrated the Continental military tyrant, whoever he was, whatever nation he led. Thus we preserved the liberties of Europe, protected the growth of its vivacious and varied society, and emerged after four terrible struggles with an ever-growing fame and widening Empire, and with the Low Countries safely protected in their independence. Here is the wonderful unconscious tradition of British Foreign Policy. All our thoughts rest in that tradition today."

"Observe," Churchill continues, "that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe. The question is not whether it is Spain, or the French Monarchy, or the French Empire, or the German Empire, or the Hitler régime. It has nothing to do with rulers of nations.... Therefore we should not be afraid of being accused of being pro-French or anti-German. If the circumstances were reversed, we could equally be pro-German and anti-French. It is a law of public policy which we are following, and not a mere expedient dictated by accidental circumstances, or likes and dislikes, or any other sentiment."

Accordingly, Churchill asks which European power is now the strongest and is seeking to establish its hegemony over the Continent. In his view, the French army is the strongest, but France is not a threat to England. "Germany, on the other hand, fears no one," he concludes. "She is arming in a manner which has never been seen in German history. She is led by a handful of triumphant desperadoes.... Very soon they will have to choose on the one hand between economic and financial collapse or internal upheaval, and on the other a war which could have no other object, and which if successful can have no other result, than a Germanised Europe under Nazi control." In these circumstances, Churchill considers that Britain's salvation "depends upon our gathering once again all the forces of Europe to contain, to restrain, and if necessary to frustrate German domination".

Churchill considered it essential to use the British-led League of Nations to set up an anti-German front in Europe. He set out from the view that Britain should rely on France and the League of Nations in the conduct of her European policy. Significantly, no mention is made of the Soviet Union, although one may conclude from Churchill's opinions on the League of Nations that he did not rule out the USSR's

participation in it, and, consequently, co-operation between Britain and the USSR in order to contain Germany.

Churchill's declaration of this programme was simply a statement, in the circumstances of the time, of the well-known British principle of the "balance of power". This principle requires nothing more than the establishment and maintenance of British hegemony in Europe. The liberal-minded author Norman Angell wrote in 1923: "The Balance of Power always means, really, an attempt to create a preponderance of power—on our side.... We do not tolerate the existence of a group of rival powers so strong that resistance to it would be hopeless; condemning us to a permanent diplomatic inferiority; making our free movement over the world a matter of sufferance. It is the whole raison d'être of the Balance of Power.... If we said, for instance: 'There are several of us. Let us agree that we shall resist collectively any member who refuses to submit his grievance to judgement and abide by it, whether that member be friendly or unfriendly'—in that case you could get equality of right. Power would be pledged to a known purpose; used under third party judgement. But the clear policy is equivalent to a demand for irresistible power. *We* must be the judge of our rival's rights, and our own.... To demand preponderance of power for undefined ends is *an act of aggression*" (my italics—*V. T.*).

Churchill's programme is thus a programme for Britain's imperialist struggle against her strongest rival, Germany. He appreciated the danger that Germany represented to Britain in the thirties much sooner than many other British politicians. He realised that what mattered to Britain was not that Hitler's Germany was preparing to fight against the Soviet Union, but that she was the most dangerous enemy facing Britain. This second fact was gradually coming to outweight the first in Churchill's mind. In realising this, he demonstrated his superiority over the other British politicians of the period.

Churchill was also aware of another fact, that the policy of Nazi Germany was also hostile towards other countries, so that it was objectively possible for Britain to form an alliance with these states in order to forestall a German attack. Finally, not least important was the fact that, by acting as the standard-bearer in the struggle against Germany, Churchill gained an opportunity to restore his political reputation and influence in Britain. It was the road that might once again

bring him to power. The greater the German menace became, the more doggedly Churchill advanced along that road. This point too is made by Emrys Hughes: "It is likely that political ambition was the most important factor which led Churchill to become a Hitler-baiter and to attempt to rouse Britain against the Nazis." He goes on to say: "His antagonism seems to have been born of fear that Germany might become too powerful under the Nazis and challenge British dominance in Western Europe and the recognition that rousing Britain against Hitler might be the only way in which he could once again gain an important public post." The American publicist Francis Neilson sums up: "Without Hitler and the background of the events that spurred him to act, Churchill might never have held office again."

Although Churchill realised the significance of the German threat to Britain fairly soon, this did not mean that he immediately adopted an unconditionally hostile attitude towards Hitler, who headed the drive for revenge and, consequently, for the preparation of a new war against the powers which had defeated Germany during the First World War, including Britain. Churchill even had a certain liking for Hitler. He valued and respected political success more than anything else. He was much impressed by the fact that an unknown corporal had risen to become a head of state. He also recognised in Hitler a ferocious enemy of the Soviet Union and the revolutionary movement. In a world that was being swept by the flames of revolution, the representative of the English bourgeoisie and the leader of German fascism were on the same side of the barricades. They were wholeheartedly united in their class approach to the events of the time. Emrys Hughes comments: "Foch, Haig, Clemenceau, Hindenburg, Mussolini, Hitler—he raised his hat to them; they belonged to his world."

Churchill never met Hitler. He says that in 1932, during his trip to Germany, it was suggested that a meeting with Hitler might be arranged in Munich, but it never took place. Later, the German Ambassador in Britain, Joachim von Ribbentrop, twice invited him to visit Germany and meet Hitler. Churchill had enough caution and circumspection to decline these invitations. He rightly commented later: "All those Englishmen who visited the German Fuehrer in these years were embarrassed or compromised."

The confrontation between Churchill and Hitler stemmed

from the antagonisms that underlay the struggle between British and German imperialism. Hitler was demanding that the Treaty of Versailles should be annulled, and Churchill interpreted this as requiring Britain to renounce the spoils of victory in the First World War. Emrys Hughes writes that Churchill "had no doubts about giving his unqualified approval to the Fascist idea in Italy, but when it spread to Germany and took the form of a belligerent resurgence of German nationalism, whose objective was to end the Treaty of Versailles and to reverse the military defeats of the First World War, that was a different matter. Had Hitler been concerned only with preaching a holy war against Russia, Churchill could not logically have quarrelled with him. For he was as bitterly anti-Bolshevik as Hitler and Goebbels or any of the school of anti-Russian hate merchants and propagandists who exploited the Red bogey in their political warfare. Winston had been a pioneer and a distinguished master of this propaganda from the beginning, long before the Russians or the rest of Europe heard of Goebbels."

During the thirties, when Churchill regularly supplied the press with articles, he wrote a number of political portraits which were later published as a separate book, entitled *Great Contemporaries*. His portrait of Hitler gives us some idea of his attitude towards the Nazi Führer in 1935. He wrote: "Although no subsequent political action can condone wrong deeds, history is replete with examples of men who have risen to power by employing stern, grim and even frightful methods but who, nevertheless, when their life is revealed as a whole, have been regarded as great figures whose lives have enriched the story of mankind. So may it be with Hitler." Churchill admired what Hitler had achieved by 1935: "He has succeeded in restoring Germany to the most powerful position in Europe, and not only has he restored the position of his country, but he has even, to a very great extent, reversed the results of the Great War.... Whatever else may be thought about these exploits they are certainly among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world."

Churchill writes approvingly of the energetic and persistent way in which Hitler struggled for power in Germany, seeing in this struggle a "patriotic ardour and love of country".

Two years later, in 1937, when the brutal nature of German fascism and of its Führer was already fully apparent,

Churchill wrote of Hitler: "One may dislike Hitler's system and yet admire his patriotic achievement." Later Churchill made a statement which does, perhaps, reveal the principal reason for his benign attitude towards Hitler at the time: "If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as admirable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations." It should be borne in mind that these words were written after the whole world had learnt of the concentration camps that had been built in Germany for the internment of progressive-minded people, of the merciless anti-Semitic terror, the bloody purge of the National Socialist Party, the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and many other, similar measures. Emrys Hughes is right to way: "There is little reason to think that Churchill was ever greatly disturbed by Hitler's ideology of his anti-democratic policies."

Churchill condemned all actions by the British Government which helped to strengthen Germany's position *vis-à-vis* Britain and which inflamed revanchist feeling in Germany. The summer of 1935 saw the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which enabled the Germans to boost the construction of their navy. When signing the agreement, the Baldwin Government intended that the German fleet which was being built would be Germany's weapon for a war against the USSR in the Baltic. But Churchill saw another side to the agreement—and he was right. "I do not believe," he said on 22 July 1935, "that this isolated action by Great Britain will be found to work for the cause of peace. The immediate reaction is that every day the German Fleet approaches a tonnage which gives it absolute command of the Baltic, and very soon one of the deterrents of a European war will gradually fade away. So far as the position in the Mediterranean is concerned, it seems to me that we are in for very great difficulties.... But worst of all is the effect upon our position at the other end of the world, in China and in the Far East."

At the time, Churchill constantly demanded that Britain should rearm, arguing that Germany was spending vast sums on armaments, that Britain was lagging behind and that the situation was a perilous one for Britain and the British Empire. In 1936, with the help of some friends, Churchill carried out a special investigation into the extent of German military spending. The investigation showed that Germany was spending £1,000 million a year on rearmament. Churchill

raised the matter in Parliament and announced his findings, though he did reduce the figures somewhat, just to be on the safe side.

In July 1936 Churchill assembled a group of Conservatives who shared his anxiety about the German threat and the state of British armaments, and he asked Baldwin to grant them an audience so as to discuss these matters. The group contained 15 leading Conservatives, and they explained their viewpoint to the Prime Minister in the course of a couple of days. Needless to say, Churchill had more to say than anyone else. Neville Chamberlain declined to attend the meeting. Churchill invited the Labour leader, Clement Attlee, and the Liberal leader, Archibald Sinclair, but they did not take part either.

The Labour Party then favoured using the League of Nations in order to support peace and the struggle against aggression. In so doing, it reflected the feeling of most working people in Britain. However, Labour did not support the demands for Britain's rearmament. The British people were not convinced that rearmament would be directed solely against aggressive Powers. The history of Britain during the age of imperialism showed that the country's armed forces were used by its rulers to further their imperialist, aggressive designs. The people's apprehension on this score explains why Churchill's rousing campaign for rapid rearmament failed to elicit much response.

Churchill and, following in his footsteps, most British historians, claim that Britain was militarily ill-prepared for the Second World War. This claim cannot be said to reflect the whole truth. It is known that Britain's military spending during the second half of the thirties was running at a very high level, and that the manufacture of weapons and ammunition for the armed forces was proceeding very rapidly. This was one of the factors responsible for the growth of industrial output in the country in the aftermath of the Great Economic Crisis. Britain's military budget, which amounted in the 1935/36 financial year to £136,900,000, rose to £254,400,000 in 1938/39. A very large proportion of this sum was spent on modernising equipment, particularly that of the Royal Air Force. In his biography of Churchill, Emrys Hughes declares that Churchill was wrong to make such a fuss about Britain's lack of military readiness. Hughes takes the view that "the British navy was certainly strong", as was the

RAF. "Nobody who read the Parliamentary debates on the service estimates for 1936," Hughes continues, "could agree with Churchill's description in September that year of 'unarmed, unthinking Britain'. She had plunged into the arms race like the Continental nations. That is the main defect of Churchill as an historian; his assertions are so often inconsistent with facts." Hughes quotes the official testimony of American military experts and the conclusions of the American historians William Langer and Everett Gleason, which refute Churchill's claims.

Churchill displayed both great drive and inconsistency in his criticism of the policies pursued by the Baldwin-Chamberlain Government. The origin of this lack of consistency was his hatred of communism. When the fascist rebellion began in Spain in 1936, followed by the German and Italian intervention against the Spanish Republic, Churchill favoured a policy of "non-intervention" in Spain's affairs. This was the policy pursued by the British Government, and it benefited both German and Italian fascism, as well as the Spanish variety. "In this quarrel," Churchill writes, "I was neutral. Naturally I was not in favour of the Communists. How could I be? ... I was sure however that with all the rest they had on their hands the British Government were right to keep out of Spain." Churchill s hatred of socialism and the revolutionary movement prevented him from seeing that the policy of "non-intervention" was not only detrimental to the freedom of the Spanish people, but also ran counter to the strategic interests of Britain.

Churchill was much distressed by his position as a backbencher, and, whenever there was the slightest change within the Government, he always tried to find a place for himself in it. In the spring of 1936 the Cabinet began to veer towards the idea of setting up a new ministry to co-ordinate the activities of the ministries concerned with defence and military production. It was suggested that the new ministry might be entrusted to Churchill, who was certainly anxious to show his prowess in that area. But his time had not yet come. Austen Chamberlain was in favour of including Churchill in the Government, but Baldwin was against. Neville Chamberlain, who was waiting for Baldwin to retire, so that he could assume the premiership, had no wish to see Churchill return to high office either. A.J.P. Taylor states that Neville Chamberlain hated Churchill, and most Conservatives still distrusted him.

In his biography of Neville Chamberlain, Keith Feiling writes: "If the new Ministry went to Churchill it would alarm those Liberal and Central elements who had taken his exclusion as a pledge against militarism, it would be against the advice of those responsible for interpreting the party's general will, and would it not when Baldwin disappeared raise a disputed succession? "

The question of whether to include Churchill in the Government or not was discussed for a whole month. His biographers agree that he was not admitted to the Government for two reasons: firstly, he was critical of the policy of *entente* with Germany, so that his appointment, his opponents felt, might have provoked Hitler; secondly, once in the Government, Churchill would inevitably have plunged into the struggle for the Prime Minister's seat and might have prevented Neville Chamberlain from getting there first. Other Conservative leaders had no wish to see Winston Churchill in overall control either.

On 9 March 1936 Baldwin appointed Sir Thomas Inskip as Minister for Coordination of Defence. The Conservatives had dispensed with Churchill's services once again. "To me," he writes, "this definite and as it seemed final exclusion from all share in our preparations for defence was a heavy blow." What was more, preference had been given to Inskip, whom not only Churchill, but many other people too thought to be a very unexceptional man. In the words of A.J.P. Taylor, "the appointment was described justifiably, though without originality, as the most extraordinary since Caligula made his horse a consul".

Once again Churchill sought calm and consolation in writing, and he started work on a historical study of international events from the time of the Treaty of Versailles to the mid-thirties. He wrote the introductory chapter, which was subsequently incorporated without change into the first volume of his memoirs dealing with the Second World War. Soon, however, Churchill abandoned this piece of work and embarked on his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples.* He wrote this enormous work very quickly, but its publication was delayed for many years.

Recalling his unsuccessful attempts to return to government, Churchill writes: "Mr. Baldwin knew no more than I how great was the service he was doing me in preventing me from becoming involved in all the Cabinet compromises and

shortcomings of the next three years, and from having, if I had remained a Minister, to enter upon a war bearing direct responsibility for conditions of national defence bound to prove fearfully inadequate." Churchill is right. It was ultimately a blessing for him that he had no part in the Government that ruled Britain on the eve of the Second World War.

On 28 May 1937 Baldwin retired from the premiership for reasons of age, and he was succeeded by Neville Chamberlain. This again raised the question of making use of Churchill inside the Government. Referring to Neville Chamberlain, Churchill recalls: "I had no expectation that he would wish to work with me, nor would he have been wise to do so at such a time." Here Churchill is not playing straight. He did, in fact, hope that he might be invited to join the Government. That was why he was then trying to curry favour with Neville Chamberlain, although, to be quite fair, he had neither liking nor aptitude for that sort of manoeuvring.

Nevertheless, in the course of the discussions in the higher echelons of the Conservative Party about the choice of a new leader, Churchill ostentatiously spoke in favour of Neville Chamberlain. What was more, he even sought the opportunity of officially supporting Chamberlain's candidature for the party leadership. It is a part of British tradition that a candidate for any post must be proposed by any one person and then seconded by any other person. Churchill was granted the honour. In his speech, he praised Neville Chamberlain as an outstanding Parliamentarian and member of the Commons. "We feel sure," he declared, "that the leader we are about to choose ... will not resent honest differences ... which must inevitably from time to time arise among those who mean the same thing." This was an appeal to Chamberlain not to resent Churchill's criticism of the Government. At the same time, it was an assurance that Churchill was, by and large, aiming to achieve the same objective that was being pursued by other leading Conservatives. He went on to say: "We have to combat the wolf of Socialism, and we shall be able to do it far more effectively as a pack of hounds than as a flock of sheep." This reference to the struggle against socialism was carefully weighed. It was, after all, the principal aim pursued both by Churchill himself and by the other leading Conservatives, including Neville Chamberlain. This was a matter over which they had no disagreements.

All these courtesies and assurances were intended to con-

vince Neville Chamberlain that he should take Winston Churchill into the Government. "This was regarded," according to Emrys Hughes, "as an attempt to get on the right side of the obstinate Neville and a bid for a post in the new Cabinet. Lord Salisbury and others supported the movement to bring Winston back into the Government, but there was no response from Downing Street. Chamberlain thought that it might be necessary to appease Hitler, not Churchill."

Undoubtedly, there were differences between Churchill and Neville Chamberlain over foreign policy. Neville Chamberlain, a man of very limited intellectual capabilities (and who, like all such people when in high public office, vastly overrated his talents), thought that he had found a way of killing two birds with one stone. He supposed that Germany should be egged on into a war against the Soviet Union and that, as a result of this war, the USSR would be destroyed or on the verge of collapse, and that Germany would so deplete her resources that she would lose the capacity to fight Britain for the hegemony of Europe. In order to arrange such a war, Chamberlain was prepared to make enormous concessions to Germany so as to strengthen her politically, economically and militarily.

It was at this point that Churchill and Chamberlain parted company. Churchill realised (showing his clear superiority over Chamberlain) that the growth of the aggressive power of Nazi Germany was a danger to Britain and several other states, as well as to the USSR. He saw that Hitler's statements to the effect that he had no hostile designs on Britain could not be believed.

It would be wrong to suppose that Neville Chamberlain was the only person anxious to organise war between Germany and the USSR. Churchill also considered that such a war would be in the interests of British imperialism. He had been spreading the idea of using Germany in the struggle against revolutionary Russia long before Chamberlain. As Emrys Hughes comments, "Churchill's hostility to Communism amounted to a disease. Indeed, had not Churchill himself advocated building up Germany as a bulwark against Russia, and was not this exactly what the Nazis were doing?" This had been his view in 1918-19 and throughout the twenties. He had written about it in *The World Crisis*. In the thirties, however, Churchill realised that Germany might strike in the West as well as in the East, and he demanded

that the British Government should adopt suitable safeguards.

Chamberlain had a very high opinion of his diplomatic ability, and he pinned completely unfounded hopes on personal talks with Hitler and Mussolini. He imagined that he had only to sit round a table with the fascist dictators and he would immediately persuade them to accept an agreement that thoroughly suited Britain.

As Germany grew stronger and so presented a bigger threat to Britain, Churchill came increasingly to think that the coalition of states to be formed against Germany ought to include the Soviet Union. However, before the Munich deal in the Autumn of 1938, he did not press the idea.

During the thirties the Soviet Government frequently submitted proposals for the creation, in one form or another, of a peace front designed to halt German aggression in Europe. But these proposals were invariably rejected by the British and other imperialist Governments. In connection with one of these proposals, dating from March 1938, Churchill writes in his memoirs: "I had been urging the prospects of a Franco-British-Russian alliance as the only hope of checking the Nazi onrush." It is significant, though, that, whenever Chamberlain informed Parliament of the Cabinet's negative reaction to a proposal originating from Moscow, Churchill did not criticise the British Government's handling of the matter. Not before Munich, at any rate.

In 1938 the problem of Czechoslovakia loomed large in international relations. Germany was demanding the partitioning of the country and the attachment of a slice of its territory to the Reich. Chamberlain was prepared to satisfy even these claims. But Churchill realised that the surrender of Czechoslovakia to Hitler would enormously strengthen Germany and correspondingly weaken the position of Britain and her allies in Europe. The balance of power would swing drastically against Britain. On 21 September, Churchill issued a press statement saying: "The partition of Czechoslovakia under pressure from England and France amounts to the complete surrender of the Western Democracies to the Nazi threat of force. Such a collapse will bring peace or security neither to England nor to France. On the contrary, it will place these two nations in an ever weaker and more dangerous situation. The mere neutralisation of Czechoslovakia means the liberation of twenty-five German divisions, which

will threaten the Western front; in addition to which it will open up for the triumphant Nazis the road to the Black Sea. It is not Czechoslovakia alone which is menaced, but also the freedom and the democracy of all nations. The belief that security can be obtained by throwing a small State to the wolves is a fatal delusion. The war potential of Germany will increase in a short time more rapidly than it will be possible for France and Great Britain to complete the measures necessary for their defence."

At the time Churchill began to speak more actively about the need for mutual understanding between Britain and the USSR in order to halt German expansion. Chamberlain and those members of the Government who shared his views were against contact with the USSR, since their policy was to conspire with Germany against the USSR, rather than with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. Although Churchill's position was coming to be adopted by more and more Conservatives, they were still very thin on the ground and were not, in any case, the party's leading lights. They included Lord Cecil, Lord Lloyd, Sir Edward Grigg, Sir Robert Horne, Robert Boothby and Brendan Bracken. Naturally enough, these modest forces were unable to bring about a change in Chamberlain's policy. As a result, as Churchill points out, in Britain "the Soviet offer was in effect ignored. They were not brought into the scale against Hitler, and were treated with an indifference—not to say disdain—which left a mark in Stalin's mind. Events took their course as if Soviet Russia did not exist. For this we afterwards paid dearly."

As early as 1935, when the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, visited Moscow, Soviet leaders told him that it was dangerous to think that Germany would definitely strike against the USSR, while Britain remained on the sidelines: "The guns might start firing in quite a different direction." This piece of intelligent advice, like many other, similar warnings issued by the USSR, was not understood in the West.

And so, at the end of September 1938, Britain's Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and France's Prime Minister, Édouard Daladier, presented themselves before Hitler in Munich, where, together with Mussolini, they concluded an agreement detaching the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and handing it over to Germany. Czechoslovakia was thereby drastically weakened, and her complote absorption into the

Reich became just a matter of months.

On his return to Britain from Munich, Chamberlain declared: "I believe it is peace for our time." Presumably he did not suspect that Hitler and Mussolini had discussed during the same Munich meeting the prospects for war against Britain. Later, on 26 June 1940, Mussolini wrote to Hitler: "Führer. Now that the time has come to thrash England, I remind you of what I said to you at Munich about the direct participation of Italy in the assault of the Isle. I am ready to take part in this with land and air forces, and you know how much I desire it."

Churchill appreciated the extent to which Munich had altered the balance of power in Europe against Britain. He quite rightly regarded the Munich agreement as a defeat for Britain and France. But, while condemning the agreement in the Commons, he attempted at the time to justify its organiser, Neville Chamberlain. "No one," he said, "has been a more resolute and uncompromising struggler for peace than the Prime Minister. Everyone knows that. Never has there been such intense and undaunted determination to maintain and secure peace."

Despite the glaring contradiction, Churchill went on to prove convincingly that the Munich agreement had nothing in common with ensuring peace, and that it made Britain dependent on Germany. As he put it, "we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road; ...we have passed on awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged....

"I find unendurable the sense of our country falling into the power, into the orbit and influence of Nazi Germany, and of our existence becoming dependent upon their goodwill or pleasure."

Indeed, after Munich, Hitler began to address Britain in very provocative terms. He declared, for example, that he would not like Churchill or certain other British politicians to come to power. "It would be a good thing," Hitler stated, "if in Great Britain people would gradually drop certain airs wlich they have inherited from the Versailles epoch. We cannot tolerate any longer the tutelage of governesses."

Churchill and his few allies condemned Munich, but they did not make use of the opportunities presented by the Munich agreement to fight the Chamberlain Government in

order to change its composition and policy. Churchill became more and more cautious and tried not to irritate the Conservative leadership. He knew that, without the assent of the people who controlled the party, he would never be given a ministerial portfolio. Parliament approved the Munich agreement by 366 votes to 114. The Labour opposition voted against. Thirty or forty Conservatives who disagreed with the Government's appraisal of Munich, including Churchill, abstained from voting.

After brief rejoicing over the "long and stable peace" that Chamberlain had brought from Munich, a more sober mood set in. It became clear to many people in Britain that Munich had only hastened war with Germany. Consequently, as Churchill remarks, "there was a strong forward surge for invigorated rearmament.... The Cabinet reached an agreeable compromise on the basis of all possible preparations without disturbing the trade of the country or irritating the Germans and Italians by large-scale measures."

On 15 March 1939 German troops entered Prague. The Czechoslovak state ceased to exist, and Germany accomplished all this without any agreement with Britain, although it had been decided in Munich that such matters would be settled jointly. This marked the end of the road for the Munich policy.

A letter dated 19 March 1939 from France's Ambassador in Germany, Robert Coulondre, to his Foreign Minister is of interest in this connection. After the Munich conference, according to the Ambassador, "France and Britain had a right to expect that, if fresh complications arose in Central Europe, the Reich would consult them.... France and Britain could not have imagined that the Reich's leaders would treat the Munich agreements and the subsequent declarations as mere pieces of paper.... But that is what has actually happened. The Munich agreements no longer exist."

The world saw not only that Hitler's word could not be trusted, but also that Chamberlain had allowed himself to be outwitted in the most elementary fashion. It became clear that, as a result of the British Prime Minister's short-sightedness, "the dread balance had turned in his [Hitler's] favour", as Churchill put it.

In April 1939, inspired by Hitler's example and heartened by the indolence of the British Government, Italy invaded Albania. Churchill made a very significant statement to the

Commons in this connection on 13 April: "After twenty-five years' experience in peace and war, I believe the British Intelligence Service to be the finest of its kind in the world. Yet we have seen, both in the case of the subjugation of Bohemia and on the occasion of the invasion of Albania, that Ministers of the Crown had apparently no inkling, or at any rate no conviction, of what was coming. I cannot believe that this is the fault of the British Secret Service....It seems to me that Ministers run the most tremendous risks if they allow the information collected by the Intelligence Department, and sent to them, I am sure, in good time, to be sifted and coloured and reduced in consequence and importance."

The Second World War was drawing nearer. It was clear that, when it broke out, the British Government would, sooner or later, have to include vigorous people who were capable of directing a war against Germany. Every day, the objective course of events raised Churchill's chances of joining the Government and coming to power. Chamberlain noted in his diary at the time: "Churchill's chances improve as war becomes more probable, and vice versa."

Even in the spring and summer of 1939, Chamberlain hoped, despite all his failures, that there would be no war between Britain and Germany, and that he would manage to come to an arrangement with Hitler. In these circumstances, not only was Churchill's presence in the Government undesirable, but it would be positively harmful, since the inclusion of Churchill would be regarded by Hitler as an unfriendly act.

Churchill was not at all happy: he had no wish to await the course of events. In March 1939 he concluded that he could become a minister if the Government in office, which was officially called the National Government, were to be expanded. Together with Eden and 30 other Conservatives, Churchill raised the question of forming an expanded National Government. Several newspapers voiced the same idea. But Chamberlain had other plans, and so yet another of Churchill's attempts to clamber into office came to grief. As Emrys Hughes puts it, "the Tories were quite prepared to allow him to continue his role as the growling British bulldog, but they thought that the place of the bulldog was not in the dining-room but in the kennel outside".

In the meantime, Chamberlain's policy had been losing more and more public support in Britain. Another process was also taking place at this time. The British people were

coming to realise that it would be impossible to prevent a fresh war without an alliance with the USSR. This feeling was spreading to the Establishment as well. "Having got ourselves into this awful plight of 1939," Churchill writes, "it was vital to grasp the larger hope." This hope was the Soviet Union.

On 17 April 1939 the Soviet Government suggested to the Governments of Britain and France that the three powers should undertake to provide each other with immediate help of all kinds, including military assistance, in the event of aggression in Europe against any one of them. The Soviet Government's submission of this proposal initiated the three-power negotiations on the conclusion of a defensive military alliance between the USSR, Britain and France against aggression in Europe. It was a sincere and constructive step by the Soviet Government. The Soviet leaders were aware that in the spring of 1939 London and Paris were only undertaking for tactical purposes a number of foreign policy measures which ostensibly heralded a change of policy, but were actually intended to seek a fresh accommodation with Hitler, i.e. to pursue the Munich line in new circumstances. This being the case, it may be asked what the Soviet Government was counting on when proposing an alliance against aggression to the British and French Governments. Firstly, the Soviet Government thought that public opinion in the Western countries would increase the pressure on Governments to co-operate with the USSR. Secondly, it took into account the effect of the antagonisms between the imperialist states which prevented an agreement between Britain and France, on the one hand, and Germany and Italy, on the other. Thirdly, and lastly, it took the view that it was necessary to explore every avenue in the attempt to set up a united front of states and peoples against the threat of fascism and war. It was a far-sighted policy. D.F. Fleming writes of the Soviet proposal of 17 April: "This was a starkly realistic proposal. Nothing less offered any hope of stopping Germany without war, or of winning it if Hitler persisted." Churchill's comment was: "If, for instance, Mr. Chamberlain on receipt of the Russian offer had replied, 'Yes. Let us three band together and break Hitler's neck,' or words to that effect, Parliament would have approved ... and history might have taken a diffrent course." Churchill was now an outspoken champion of an agreement with the Soviet Union.

In Britain and France the situation regarding foreign and

domestic policy in the spring of 1939 was such that the two Governments were obliged to embark on talks about the Soviet proposals. But they pursued the talks reluctantly, with no intention of bringing them to a successful conclusion. Chamberlain deliberately dragged his feet. He needed time in order to reach an accommodation with Germany. The question of the talks with the USSR was sporadically raised in Parliament. Churchill, Eden and Lloyd George pressed for the immediate conclusion of an alliance with the USSR. During the debate, Churchill said: "I have been quite unable to understand what is the objection to making the agreement with Russia ... in the broad and simple form proposed by the Russian Soviet Government.... The alliance is solely for the purpose of resisting further acts of aggression and of protecting the victims of aggression. I cannot see what is wrong with that. What is wrong with this simple proposal? " "Why," Churchill asked, "should you shrink from becoming the ally of Russia now, when you may by that very fact prevent the breaking out of war? ... If the worst comes to the worst, you are in the midst of it with them, and you have to make the best of it with them."

In his support of an alliance with the USSR, Churchill even went so far as to call for a respectful attitude towards the Soviet Union. "Clearly," he said, "Russia is not going to enter into agreements unless she is treated as an equal." He then went on to say: "If His Majesty's Government, having neglected our defences for a long time, having thrown away Czechoslovakia with all that Czechoslovakia meant in military power, having committed us, without examination of the technical aspects, to the defence of Poland and Romania, now reject and cast away the indispensable aid of Russia, and so lead us in the worst of all ways into the worst of all wars, they will have ill deserved the confidence and, I will add, the generosity with which they have been treated by their fellow-countrymen."

These remarks of Churchill's show that, at decisive moments in history, he was capable, despite his strong anti-Soviet prejudices, of making highly rational and profound judgements. This fact illustrates his qualities as a major statesman. If the British Government had listened to his voice, Germany would have been unable, in September 1939, to start the Second World War.

But Chamberlain's Government adopted a different

course. Together with the French Government, it frustrated the talks with the USSR and compelled the Soviet Government to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany. By thwarting the formation of a united front against aggression, the British Government had helped Germany to plunge Europe into war.

Churchill recognised that the Soviet Government's action during those fateful days was reasonable and justifiable, and that its policy was, as he says, "realistic in a high degree." At the same time he wrote that the course of events in August 1939 "marks the culminating failure of British and French foreign policy and diplomacy over several years". Describing British policy in the period between the two world wars, Churchill said: "British fatuity and fecklessness ... played a definite part in the unleashing upon the world of horrors and miseries...."

In August 1939, Churchill, who was in France at the time, met the French General Georges and was informed about the state of the French and German armies. Churchill was much impressed by the figures cited. He declared to Georges: "But you are the masters." This was indeed the case, to judge from the mere size of the forces at the disposal of Britain, France and Germany.

Churchill returned to Britain, firmly convinced that his hour was at hand. Knowing that Hitler regarded him as an enemy, he feared an attempt on his life by the numerous German agents in Britain. He invited the former Scotland Yard Inspector Thompson, who had protected him earlier, to move into his house and bring his revolver with him. Churchill made his own gun serviceable too. While his employer slept, Thompson remained awake. Churchill gives the following explanation of these precautions: "In these hours I knew that if war came—and who could doubt its coming?— a major burden would fall upon me." The objective course of events had finally cleared Churchill's road to power.

Chapter 9

His Finest Hour

On 1 September 1939 Germany attacked Poland. Britain and France had a treaty of alliance with the victim of aggression, in accordance with which both countries had agreed to immediately provide Poland with all kinds of help, including military assistance. It was assumed that this help, or at least a British declaration of war against Germany, would automatically be forthcoming. In fact, however, despite its solemn undertakings, the Chamberlain Government attempted at the last moment to evade fulfilling its obligations to Poland and to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Polish question with Germany. It was, in effect, to be Munich all over again, but this time at the expense of Poland. The well-known Labour politician Hugh Dalton noted in his diary on 2 September: "It seemed that appeasement was once more in full swing, and that our word of honour to the Poles was being deliberately broken."

The British people considered that there should be no retreat, that the policy of appeasement, which had been such a conspicuous failure, should be abandoned and that Britain should honour her obligations to Poland, i.e. declare war immediately against fascist Germany. In the Commons the overwhelming majority took the same view. Neville Chamberlain failed to appreciate the extent to which feelings had changed both among the people and in the Commons, and tried to play for time, hoping that he would somehow be able

to come to terms with the Germans and avoid a declaration of war. On 2 September the Commons resounded with menacing speeches against the Government. MPs were demanding that Britain should keep her word to Poland.

When reading through the Parliamentary debates of the time and the numerous studies dealing with that particular period of British history, one is rather surprised by the seemingly strange position adopted by Winston Churchill. The most intractable critic of the Government, who had demanded over the years that Britain should offer stiff resistance to Germany, suddenly, at this crucial moment, fell silent. The spirited calls for a declaration of war now came from other, less influential members of the Conservative opposition, as well as from Labour MPs.

There was a simple explanation for Churchill's conduct. On the day when Germany attacked Poland, he received an invitation from Neville Chamberlain to call on him that evening at 10, Downing Street. Churchill immediately sensed what was in the air, and so his behaviour on 1 September was restrained and cautious. His suppositions proved correct. Chamberlain suggested that he join the Government and become a member of the War Cabinet. Churchill accepted on the spot. The conversation then turned to the composition of the War Cabinet, during which Churchill attempted to bring some of his supporters into the Government. That night, Churchill wrote a letter to Chamberlain, advising him to include in the Government a few Liberals (he was thinking particularly of his old colleague Archibald Sinclair) and Anthony Eden, who had resigned from the Chamberlain Government on 20 February 1938 and who had then come to be on good terms with Churchill. In his letter Churchill wrote about what others were saying in Parliament. He expressed his anxiety over Chamberlain's reluctance to declare war on Germany.

Chamberlain took his time not only in declaring war, but also in including Churchill in the Government. This was quite natural. Since he intended to reach an understanding with Hitler, Chamberlain could not irritate the Führer by making someone like Churchill a minister. On the night of 2 September, Churchill wrote to Chamberlain: "I have not heard anything from you since our talks on Friday, when I understood that I was to serve as your colleague, and when you told me that this would be announced speedily. I really

do not know what has happened during the course of this agitated day; though it seems to me that entirely different ideas have ruled from those which you expressed to me when you said 'the die was cast'."

Of course, Churchill was perfectly well aware of what was going on. Yet he feared to oppose Chamberlain openly in Parliament, since he realised that, if he did, the Prime Minister might not want to take him into the Government even if war were declared. But Churchill knew that Chamberlain was afraid of the criticism that Churchill might level against the Government in the Commons. It was in order to silence Churchill that Chamberlain had proposed his entry into the Government on 1 September. Now, however, on the night of 2 September, when it had become clear that the Prime Minister was procrastinating, Churchill decided to scare him. He informed Chamberlain that, if he had not heard of Chamberlain's plans regarding his inclusion in the Government before the beginning of the Parliamentary debate that was to start at midday on 3 September, then he might address the Commons. What was more, he asked Chamberlain to discuss with him also the composition of the future War Cabinet, thus claiming that the matter needed his approval. It is not clear what he actually intended to do during the Parliamentary debate on 3 September. In any case, Chamberlain tied Churchill's hands by sending him a note in the Commons that day, asking him to call in at his office immediately after the debate.

Chamberlain declared in the Commons that Britain had been in a state of war with Germany since 11 a.m. that day, 3 September 1939. A.J.P. Taylor sums up the situation by saying: "The house of commons forced war on a reluctant British government."

Churchill had many reasons for wholeheartedly endorsing the decision taken by the Government and supported by Parliament. "As I sat in my place, listening to the speeches," he was subsequently to write, "a very strong sense of calm came over me, after the intense passions and excitements of the last few days. I felt serenity of mind and was conscious of a kind of uplifted detachment from human and personal affairs." However, the human and personal affairs soon reasserted themselves. Churchill knew full well that the declaration of war on Germany amounted to official acknowledgement that Neville Chamberlain's policy had failed. This,

in turn, meant that, as the war gathered momentum, Chamberlain's departure from the premiership would become inevitable.

As the man who, during the years that preceded the outbreak of war, had consistently and resolutely criticised Chamberlain's foreign policy and had been proved right by the course of events, Churchill was riding high in British public esteem. As an advocate of resistance to an aggressive Germany, he had earned great prestige. But he knew that, although this was a valuable asset, it would not be enough to place him in the Prime Minister's chair. A great deal depended on the Conservative Party, which commanded an overwhelming Parliamentary majority. Consequently, at the beginning of the war and subsequently Churchill refrained from voicing the slightest criticism of the party or its leader, Neville Chamberlain. He emphasised, moreover, that the past, i.e. the responsibility shared by Chamberlain and the other Conservative leaders for their disastrous policy, should be quietly buried. He was thus signalling for all he was worth that he was ready to co-operate wholeheartedly with these people over all matters of foreign, military and domestic policy.

Throughout his long political life Churchill had contrived to sour his relations with all political parties. He now had to work hard to create a basis for collaboration with the Conservative leadership. He understood this and spared no effort to repair the breach.

Even at home he no longer allowed either himself or any member of his family to crack jokes at the expense of Chamberlain. The American journalist Virginia Cowles recalls one occasion when she was having lunch at Churchill's house. The table talk always revolved around politics. Previously, caustic jokes about Chamberlain and the other appeasers had been quite common. "On this occasion, however," she writes, "one of Mr. Churchill's children attempted a mild joke and I was astonished to see a scowl appear on the father's face. With enormous solemnity he said: 'If you are going to make offensive remarks about my chief you will have to leave the table. We are united in a great and common cause and I am not prepared to tolerate such language about the Prime Minister.' I honoured Mr. Churchill's sentiments, but having heard the same joke from his own lips a few months before, I found it difficult to suppress a smile."

Churchill assiduously cultivated and publicised his co-operation with Chamberlain and the Conservatives, since he knew how much his political destiny depended on them. "The government were still moving into war backwards, with their eyes tightly closed," A.J.P. Taylor records. "Churchill was the one exception, a cuckoo in the nest.... Churchill had stood almost alone until the outbreak of war, his personal following reduced to two.... In 1939 the Conservatives had a crushing majority, and Churchill could have made nothing against them if backed only by the two Opposition parties—itself an unlikely hypothesis—and some Conservative rebels. He had to carry the entire Conservative party, not to split it. This was, in any case, what he wanted to do. Years of bitter experience ... had taught him the need for organized support.... Churchill therefore walked warily. He did not intrigue. He was a loyal colleague."

Churchill joined the Chamberlain Government as First Lord of the Admiralty and a member of the Cabinet. He wished unreservedly to see the war against Germany conducted in a vigorous and resolute fashion, but the Chamberlain Government had no intention of directing the war in that way. The period from September 1939 to April 1940 has gone down in history as the time of "the phoney war": although officially in a state of war with Germany, Great Britain did not, in effect, engage in any real hostilities. The Chamberlain Government and the Government of France did not lift a finger to help Poland, and, once Poland had been overrun, the British Government thought in terms of doing nothing to annoy the Germans so as not to complicate the attainment of a negotiated peace with Germany. It was, essentially, a continuation of the old Munich policy in new circumstances.

Churchill was not impressed by this policy, but, as a member of the Government, he did not criticise it. He did occasionally press for the vigorous conduct of the war, but he spoke cautiously, so as to avoid irritating Chamberlain and his other Government colleagues. Hitler presented hypocritical proposals for peace to Britain, saying that peace was possible so long as "the views of Churchill and his following" did not prevail in the British Government. Churchill responded with statements to the effect that Hitler and the Nazi regime represented a deadly threat to all that Britain and France held dear.

Churchill steamed into action at the Admiralty. The naval sphere was the one that was the most militarily active during "the phoney war". At sea the war was real enough. Churchill worked for 18 hours a day directing the sailing of merchant ships in Navy-protected convoys, drawing up plans for a naval blockade of Germany, looking into the construction of new warships, and organising the hunt for German submarines and raiders.

Churchill was now interested more than ever before in many matters that had no connection with the Admiralty. A potential Prime Minister (Churchill had no doubt as to his destiny) must be well informed about a great deal. He set up a special statistical section in the Admiralty and placed in charge of it his old and closest adviser on scientific matters, Professor Lindemann. He was provided with a group of energetic and capable assistants, who were given access to the official information that was made available to Churchill as a member of the War Cabinet. Lindemann's section supplied Churchill with tables and information dealing not so much with statistics as the course of the war as a whole. He was thus equipped with a constant source of reliable information.

At this time direct contact was established between Churchill and the US President, Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a wise statesman, and in some respects he surpassed Winston Churchill. He was able to make a cool and calm analysis of the world situation, and he had none of the adventurism that marred Churchill's capabilities. By then, Roosevelt had probably come to realise that, in the circumstances, the political future in Britain lay with Churchill. On 11 September 1939 Roosevelt, who had previously met Churchill only once (during the First World War), wrote him a personal letter welcoming his return to the Admiralty. "What I want you and the Prime Minister to know," the President said, "is that I shall at all times welcome it if you will keep me in touch personally with anything you want me to know about. You can always send sealed letters through your pouch or my pouch."

Churchill was delighted with Roosevelt's letter. This sort of attention from the President was a substantial measure of political support (since Chamberlain knew about it) and was of great significance for the future. Churchill replied with alacrity, signing himself "Naval Person". This marked the beginning of his correspondence with the US President,

which continued until the spring of 1945, when it was broken off by Roosevelt's death. Each of them wrote close on 1,000 letters.

The "phoney war" could not last forever. The British Government decided to seek a solution by switching the war from Germany to the Soviet Union. The idea was to somehow end the war against Germany so as to act in concert with her against the USSR. In the autumn of 1939, when the Soviet-Finnish War began, not without some incitement from the British Establishment, London decided that a suitable opportunity for changing course in the war had presented itself. At that time Churchill was advancing the idea of carrying out a military operation in Norway and Sweden so as to halt the supply of Swedish ore to Germany. After the outbreak of the Soviet-Finnish War, the British Government, in collusion with the French Government, not only gave Finland various kinds of help, but also decided to send troops through Norway and Sweden in order to aid Finland in her war against the USSR. Such an act would make war between Britain and the USSR a certainty.

Churchill supported Chamberlain in his plans for despatching British and French troops to Finland and so, at a certain stage, shared his idea of switching the war from Germany to the USSR. There were a number of reasons for this position. Churchill, of course, was much taken by the idea of setting Germany against Soviet Russia. Then there is also the point that he probably had no wish to part company with Chamberlain and the other members of the Government, who wished to alter course. The parts of Churchill's speeches of the time relating to the Soviet Union came to differ little from the views expressed by the Prime Minister. His attitude towards the USSR had undergone a radical change in comparison with the previous year, before he joined the Government. Strident assertions about the USSR reminiscent of the speeches he had made during the intervention and the twenties came once again to the fore.

"If war with Russia had developed," comments Emrys Hughes, "it is probable that the British expeditionary force would have been lost in Finland, and Britain would have had a greater disaster than the Dardanelles." A.J.P. Taylor also recalls the Dardanelles in this connection: "The Finnish campaign was Gallipoli again, and worse," and goes on to explain: "The motives for the projected expedition to

Finland defy rational analysis. For Great Britain and France to provoke war with Soviet Russia when already at war with Germany seems the product of a madhouse, and it is tempting to suggest a more sinister plan: switching the war on to an anti-Bolshevik course, so that the war against Germany could be forgotten or even ended.... At present, the only charitable conclusion is to assume that the British and French governments had taken leave of their senses."

The progressive British magazine *Labour Monthly* declared in February 1940: "The most chauvinist aggressive reactionary forces of British and French imperialism, which seek by all means to extend the war and to break the Western stalemate by the development of an Eastern theatre of war here join hands with the former Munich elements which stumbled into this war against their intention, precisely because they were seeking to promote anti-Soviet war, and would now be only too thankful to find a means to transform this war into an anti-Soviet war and to build on this basis a world counter-revolutionary front under British leadership." This appears to be a convincing explanation of both the "madhouse" plans and of Churchill's seemingly incomprehensible behaviour in joining forces with those who wished to divert the war. Churchill was a typical member of those "most chauvinist aggressive reactionary forces of British imperialism" referred to in the *Labour Monthly*.

Unlike Churchill, progressive people in Britain realised how reckless the policy of the British Government was during the Soviet-Finnish War. The Communist Party of Great Britain condemned the attempts to set up an anti-Soviet imperialist bloc. The anti-Soviet policy of the Conservative Government and the right-wing Labour leaders was opposed by politically conscious rank-and-file members of the Labour Party. Reflecting their views, Denis Pritt, a member of the Labour Party's National Executive, published two books in which he marshalled convincing arguments against the anti-Soviet course pursued by the Conservative Government, which threatened to start a war between Britain and the USSR.

In February 1940 .the *Labour Monthly* arranged a conference for delegates of working-class and public organisations. The conference resolved that "the cause of the Soviet Union is the cause of world socialism, of the whole international working class. We ask the working class to

remember how it stopped the anti-Soviet war in 1920, by agitation and strike action, and to act swiftly now to prevent such a war once more."

Finnish leaders realised that, if they received help from Britain and France, the country was threatened with a national catastrophe. Consequently, when its troops were defeated, the Finnish Government made peace with the Soviet Union, thus saving Britain from the disastrous consequences to which her policy of diverting the war would inevitably have led.

Early in the spring of 1940 Chamberlain took the view that Britain was assured of victory in the war against Germany. He thought that during the "phoney war" Britain and France had so mobilised their resources that the balance of power had altered in favour of the Allies. This was one of Chamberlain's numerous miscalculations on major strategic issues. Five days later the Germans struck in Denmark and Norway, and swiftly occupied those countries. Britain's attempts to use her Navy, Air Force and infantry to resist the Germans in Norway ended in defeat.

The bankrupt "phoney war" policy, obvious failure in the Finnish episode, and the defeat in Norway caused grave resentment against the Chamberlain Government among the British people. "They blamed the men at the top," Taylor records. "Their wrath turned against Chamberlain; their enthusiasm towards Churchill." The public mood extended into Parliament too. Churchill's Labour, Liberal and Conservative supporters were not alone in seeing that the Chamberlain Government was on its last legs. In the spring of 1940 this view was also shared by many of Chamberlain's loyal supporters among the Conservative MPs.

On 4 April alarmed Conservatives set up a Watching Committee, consisting of about 20 of the most prominent members of the Commons and the Lords. Under the chairmanship of Lord Salisbury, the members of the committee met regularly to exchange views, and occasionally passed on their ideas to the Government. They played a notable part in the Commons debate of 7-8 May, which proved to be very dramatic.

During the Commons debate on the Government's performance, many speakers declared that its incompetence had become totally apparent and that it should resign. The well-known Conservative Leopold Amery quoted the words

Cromwell had addressed to the Long Parliament: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go! "

Churchill did not oppose Chamberlain during the debate. It is true that, as a member of the Government, he bore some of the collective responsibility for its actions and was as much to blame as anyone else for the British reverses in Norway. But, more important, he was playing a subtle and cautious political game. He needed to show the Conservatives that he was reliable and could be counted upon at a difficult moment. Accordingly, he even tried to defend Chamberlain and stressed his own responsibility for the lack of success. Lloyd George, who launched a lively attack on Chamberlain, warned Churchill "not to allow himself to be converted into an air-raid shelter to keep the splinters from hitting his colleagues".

When the House divided, Chamberlain won by 81 votes. This was actually a major defeat, since the majority of the pro-Government MPs was usually 240. Many Conservatives voted against the Government or abstained, which was also an expression of dissatisfaction.

The results of the division meant that the Government had to resign. The feeling that was uppermost in the country and in Parliament was such that the obvious successor to Chamberlain as Prime Minister was Churchill. Churchill was aware of this, but he also knew that his candidature was not to the liking of Chamberlain and many Conservative leaders. The Conservatives did not approve of his dictatorial ways. They remembered the old wounds that Churchill had inflicted on them over many years. Nor were they convinced that he would conduct the war in the way that suited them. The Conservatives would really have preferred as Prime Minister a calm and reliable true blue and one of the men who had supported the Munich policy.

Chamberlain proposed that a government should be formed by Lord Halifax, the "prince of appeasers", as Taylor calls him. The Labour leader, Clement Attlee, also favoured Halifax at first. This was an important factor, since it was necessary, in the circumstances, to form a coalition government, consisting of Labour men and Liberals, as well as Conservatives. The greatest obstacle blocking Halifax's way to 10, Downing Street was Churchill.

Public opinion wished to see Churchill head the Government. But he himself could not lay any full-bloodied claim to the post. There were two reasons for this: firstly, he had frequently stated in public that, in the exceptional circumstances created by the war, he was prepared to serve his country under anyone; secondly, an outright demand for the premiership would be ill-received by the Conservative Party, or at least by its leaders. Any show of assertiveness might spoil everything.

That lover of involved political intrigue, Lord Beaverbrook, then took a hand in this complicated situation. He was wiser than Chamberlain and many other Conservative leaders. He realised that, since the Conservative Party was so discredited in the eyes of the people as a result of the failures of Chamberlain's policy, and since Churchill's prestige was riding high, it was in the interests of the Conservatives themselves to make Churchill Prime Minister and thus ward off the discontent of the masses. Beaverbrook tried to persuade Churchill to make an open bid for the premiership. But Churchill was maintaining a low profile, and he refused to act in accordance with Beaverbrook's recommendation, which was also supported by several other leaders. But when the Labour leadership conferred and concluded in favour of Churchill, and he learnt that Labour would be prepared to serve in a government under his leadership, Churchill told Beaverbrook that he had only one option: if he were invited to serve under Halifax, he would decline to answer.

On 9 May, Chamberlain met Churchill, Halifax and Margesson, the Conservative Chief Whip. Margesson suggested that Halifax should become Prime Minister. Chamberlain then posed the key question: would Churchil agree to serve in a government headed by Halifax? The supreme speaker and lover of words held his peace. The heavy silence went on for two minutes. Halifax interpreted it as a refusal, which is how everyone understood it. For that reason, the "prince of appeasers" was the first to break the silence with the comment that, as a member of the House of Lords, he would find it difficult to form a government, since in such a war the Prime Minister needed to be a member of the Commons. "Churchill held them in the hollow of his hand," Taylor concludes. "If he stood out of the government, they would all be swept away in a storm of national indignation."

When this bitter but unpublicised struggle for power at

the top end of the Conservative Party was at its height, Germany attacked on the Western Front, moving against France, Belgium and Holland. This occurred on the morning of 10 May. Chamberlain clutched at this new development in order to hang on to power. He decided that, against the background of real hostilities, no one would dare to press for a change of government, and Labour and the Liberals would agree to form a coalition government under his leadership. The gamble did not come off, for both Labour and the Liberals refused. Chamberlain realised that nothing could save him now. He went to Buckingham Palace and tendered his Government's resignation to the King. The King said that the formation of a new Cabinet would presumably be entrusted to Halifax. Chamberlain explained the situation, and at 6 p.m. on 10 May 1940 the King invited Churchill to form a government.

Politically, Churchill had everything going for him at that moment. The people were calling for a determined struggle against fascist Germany, and among the prominent people on the British political stage at the time only Churchill had revealed the outstanding ability that would be needed to direct such a war. In Denis Pritt's words, "Churchill, whatever his faults, and whatever errors—or worse—he made in either the First World War or the Second, and whatever damage his anti-Sovet attitude was to cause, was clearly a strong man, capable of inspiring the people, and unmistakably hostile to the Germans". After the events of the spring and summer of 1940, "a shift in the balance of relations within the ruling class followed," the *Labour Monthly* records. "In Britain the Munichite politicians were heavily discredited, but remained strongly entrenched in positions of power. Direct governmental leadership passed into the hands of the alternative section of the ruling class, represented by Churchill, which had consistently stood for an active policy of opposition to Hitler."

At long last, Churchill held the power that he had been seeking all his life. He later recalled the feelings that he experienced on 10 May 1940, when he "acquired the chief power in the State". He wrote: "During these last crowded days of the political crisis my pulse had not quickened at any moment.... As I went to bed at about 3 a.m. I was conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were

walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial." Churchill had always considered that fate had made him superior to all other people. Having become the Prime Minister of Great Britain in her most difficult hour, he believed even more implicitly in his exceptional powers. "I thought I knew a good deal about it all," he wrote, "and I was sure I should not fail. Therefore, although impatient for the morning, I slept soundly and had no need for cheering dreams. Facts are better than dreams."

The facts at the time were that the Franco-British front in Western Europe was crumbling beneath the powerful onslaught of the German armies, and the very existence of the independent British state was being gradually jeopardised.

The Conservatives were extremely loth to hand over power to Churchill. When, in May 1940, after forming a government, he made his first appearance in the Commons, the Conservative section of the House staged a demonstrative show of support for Chamberlain and highlighted their hostility towards Churchill. All the Conservative MPs—the overwhelming majority in the Commons—rose to their feet and cheered Chamberlain, while Churchill was greeted by a deathly hush along the Conservative benches. Throughout the first few weeks, he was welcomed mainly by Labour. The reason was that Churchill had been forced on the Conservatives by a combination of circumstances, and they were making this clear through their conduct.

Churchill formed a government of Labour and Liberal, as well as Conservative, ministers. The Labour leader, Clement Attlee, was made Lord Privy Seal. At first he was in effect, and later officially, the second-in-command in the Government. Ernest Bevin, a very reactionary Labour man, was appointed Minister of Labour and Minister of National Service. Herbert Morrison became Minister of Supply, Albert Alexander was First Lord of the Admiralty, and Arthur Greenwood was the Minister without Portfolio. The Liberal leader, Archibald Sinclair, an old ally of Churchill's, became Secretary of State for Air. All the other important posts went to the Conservatives, who thus remained the dominant power in the Government and determined its political stance.

Many of the ministers responsible for conducting the Munich policy stayed on in the new Government. Chamberlain and Halifax became members of the War Cabinet, the

supreme body directing the war. The opponents of appeasement were brought into the Government in very small numbers and were given only secondary posts. Duff Cooper, for instance, who had resigned from the Chamberlain Government in 1938 in protest against the Munich agreement, received only the Ministry of Information.

The preponderance of appeasers in the Churchill Government arose not only because Churchill depended on the Conservative Party, which they led, and on the Conservative majority in the Commons which they commanded, but also because Churchill and the former appeasers shared the same class positions, so that they did not find it too difficult to come to a working arrangement. While the Government was being formed, there was talk of including those who had vigorously opposed the policy of appeasing the aggressors and of throwing out those who were responsible for it. Churchill categorically rejected these demands and sheltered the former appeasers. He appeased the appeasers and ignored the splendid opportunity to clear out the men who had sought to reach an accommodation with Nazi Germany. Britain's progressive and patriotic forces had to mount a prolonged struggle to remove them. While this was going on, the former appeasers exerted a strong influence on the policy of Churchill's Government and made it more difficult to prosecute the war against fascist Germany and her allies.

The Communist Party organised a massive campaign to remove the appeasers from office. The party demanded an unequivocal repudiation of the Munich policy and vigorous conduct of the war against fascism—demands that were supported by many trade union and working-class organisations. A People's Convention, held in January 1941, backed this call and proposed the formation of a People's Government that would represent the interests of the working people of Britain. The resolutions of the People's Convention were a stern warning to the British Establishment that the people would tolerate no more of the Munich policy.

In addition to being Prime Minister, Churchill also made himself the leader of the House of Commons and the Minister of Defence. As Minister of Defence, he had, in effect, undertaken the supreme direction of military operations. It will be recalled that Churchill's own military experience was confined to service in some very minor capacities (the most important of which was that of commander of an infantry

battalion), and in any case that service was not of long duration. However, he had been interested in military matters for many years, had studied military history and had attentively followed the activities of the British War Office, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry. This had given him a considerable amount of general military knowledge and enabled him to approach military leaders, as A.J.P. Taylor remarks, "with original, often with dangerous, ideas" in riotous profusion. The fertility of Churchill's mind was also noted by President Roosevelt, who came to know him very well during the war years. On one occasion, he is reported to have said: "You know, that was Churchill's idea. Just one of those brilliant ideas that he has. He has a hundred a day and about four of them are good! "

The British military had a fairly tough time with Churchill, since he had a very determined character and boundless conviction in his own wisdom and soundness of judgment, and disliked encountering resistance from any quarter. It was very hard to argue with him, since he could out-talk anyone. Strange though it may seem, however, there were no major conflicts between the amateur strategist and the professionals during the Second World War. Both Churchill and the military leaders held roughly identical views on the conduct of the war.

In retrospect, long after the war, some military leaders argued with Churchill in their memoirs and sometimes even permitted themselves some rather scathing remarks about his interference in military matters. This is largely explained by the fact that sometimes, as Taylor puts it, "Churchill, in his romantic way, suggested that conduct of the war would be much improved if some generals, or even some chiefs of staff, were shot".

Churchill's dissatisfaction with the generals was, in most cases, justified. The press also frequently criticised British generals for losing battles owing to their ineptitude, lack of initiative, and sheer dithering. The criticism was generally well founded. Churchill's harassment of the military leaders was an undoubtedly useful exercise and spurred them on to greater effort.

Churchill treated the heads of the civil ministries and departments in a similar way. He saw to it that the country really was put onto a war footing. A vast army was quickly raised, the RAF and the Navy were expanded and the war

industry was vigorously developed.

Churchill gave a great deal of attention to foreign policy. Since becoming Prime Minister, he handled the main issues in Anglo-American relations in his personal correspondence with President Roosevelt. He also spent a lot of time on relations with the Soviet Union. The Foreign Office, which was originally headed by Halifax and later by Churchill's close colleague Anthony Eden, was pushed into the background. After the turning point in the war had been reached in 1943, Churchill began to devote increasing attention to other foreign policy issues, especially the postwar peace settlement.

Eden's role as Foreign Secretary during the war years was an insignificant one. He was completely overshadowed by the Prime Minister. In his war reminiscences Churchill frequently talks about exchanging messages on questions of foreign policy with Roosevelt and Stalin as though Eden and the Foreign Office simply did not exist. It was probably in order to dispel this rather unflattering image of himself that Eden wrote in his memoirs, published in 1962: "Even in the times of highest pressure, he [Churchill] never sent a message with international implications without either showing it to me himself or sending it across to the Foreign Office for my approval before despatch." Churchill's war reminiscences do not corroborate this claim.

Churchill was decisive, strong-willed and extremely vigorous. What was more, he was a good speaker. He made full use of these qualities in order to manage the country during the war. In numerous speeches, written with a precise regard for the situation and the psychological state of the British people, he lambasted Hitler and his crew, and urged his people to wage the war with all the strength they could muster. Churchill's speeches impressed the masses, who had, at long last, found a dynamic wartime leader who gave voice to their own feelings. His prestige was growing.

During the war, power in its entirety was legally concentrated in the hands of the War Cabinet. The Cabinet enjoyed the support of all the political parties represented in Parliament and so felt very secure. Churchill's personal qualities made him the outstanding member of the War Cabinet. In conjunction with the rights conferred on him as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, this led to the concentration in his hands of vast, virtually unlimited power.

Many historians note in this connection that circumstances combined to turn Churchill into a dictator. This was facilitated not just by events, but also by Churchill's limitless belief in his own capabilities.

The Prime Minister's colleagues in the Government often found themselves confronted with an uphill task. After one meeting, Cadogan noted in his diary: "How frightened of the P.M. all these people are." Churchill once described his method for running state affairs in the following phrase: "All I wanted was compliance with my wishes after reasonable discussion." What he called "reasonable discussion" usually ended in the adoption of his views and proposals. There were, of course, exceptions to the rule, but they did not alter the general state of affairs. Oliver Lyttelton, who occupied a number of Government posts under Churchill during the war, relates the following episode. On one occasion Churchill called a meeting of the Defence Committee at 10 p.m. He entered, with his chin thrust forward—a sure sign of imminent conflict. He named the item for discussion and invited opinions. When Lyttelton had presented his view, Churchill flew into a rage. "I have never heard in all my life," he declared, "a more idiotic suggestion advanced by a senior Minister of the Crown." The suggestion turned out to be perfectly feasible and was supported by those present. Churchill had no choice but to wind up the meeting after midnight, grumbling: "In short, we unanimously adopt the idiotic suggestion of the Minister of Production."

Churchill's colleagues were very much irritated by the timetable to which the Prime Minister worked. All the most important conferences were held in the evening and sometimes ended in the small hours. A long time before, when Churchill was a young cavalry officer in Cuba, he had noticed that the Spaniards used to take a rest during the hottest part of the day. He had become accustomed to resting in the afternoon during the First World War, when he had been at the Admiralty. He possessed the fortunate gift of being able to fall asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. He made use of this capacity every day and so, having rested during the afternoon, he was able to work far into the night. He jokingly recommended the idea of the siesta to his colleagues, but, as his memoirs show, found few disciples. One of them, however, was Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, who became so fond of dozing in his armchair that he would

even fall asleep during the meetings of the War Cabinet.

Churchill would usually wake up at about 8 a.m. and would then lie in bed, reading the newspapers, telegrams and other urgent material. He read the newspapers very attentively. His personal physician, Lord Moran, recalls that "he always wants to know what the papers are saying about him". In this position, Churchill would also receive visitors and dictate instructions and recommendations to the ministries and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This material was immediately passed on to General Ismay, Deputy Secretary (Military) to War Cabinet and Churchill's personal representative on the Chiefs of Staff Committee. His work in bed would often go on until noon.

Churchill's first days in office were difficult. The German armies broke through the Franco-British front, poured across Northern France, advanced towards Paris and threatened to destroy the British expeditionary corps. Churchill probably realised during the first days of the German offensive that the battle for France was lost. This meant that in the very near future Britain would be left on her own, without her main and last ally.

The Churchill Government had to tackle a number of assignments immediately. It needed to prolong the resistance of France by any means so as to inflict maximal losses on the German war machine and gain enough time to strengthen Britain's defences, i.e., to prepare the Army, RAF and armaments production.

The French called insistently for reinforcements. Britain was weak in infantry, but she did have a strong military air force, and the French Government demanded more and more squadrons. Churchill flew to France several times in order to meet members of the French Government. At the meetings, the French generally asked for aircraft, and Churchill declined to commit the RAF's reserves to action in France, insisting that the French should continue the struggle with the means at their disposal.

Before long, large contingents of British and French troops were cut off by the Germans in Northern France, and the evacuation of the British expeditionary corps came to be the Churchill Government's chief concern. The British troops and some of the French forces were evacuated, but they had to abandon all their equipment in France. The British Army had thus suffered a crushing defeat, and the prospects for

Britain's continuing the struggle against Germany seemed very gloomy.

At the moment, as never before, Churchill's determination and will to fight made their presence felt. When Parliament assembled on 4 June 1940, he reported on the evacuation from Dunkirk and warned: "We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations." He delivered a stirring speech to the British people. Despite the reverses, he said, "we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle".

In the second half of May 1940, Churchill made a futile attempt to buy off Mussolini. He sent a personal message to the Duce recalling his long-standing friendly attitude towards him, and requested him not to enter the war on the side of Germany. The appeal had no effect, and fascist Italy hastened to assist the victor. Britain thus had to face a new and strong enemy in Southern Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa.

During the last days of the tragedy of France Churchill tried to prolong her resistance by voicing the sensational idea of amalgamating France and Britain into a single state that would have one constitution, a common parliament, a single government and combined armed forces. Behind this proposal lay the wish to prompt France to continue the fight against Germany by drawing on her colonial possessions and, above all, on North Africa. In addition, if given effect, Churchill's idea would have put the French colonial empire and the powerful French Navy at the disposal of Britain. But by then the French Government had succumbed to the faction that was looking to collaboration with a victorious Germany rather than with Britain, whose days then seemed to be numbered. Churchill's proposal fell on deaf ears. On 22 June 1940, France signed an armistice with Germany.

Having lost all her allies, Britain stood alone.

This was the time when the people of Britain displayed an uncommon courage. Aware of the deadly threat to their independence, they resolved to renew the struggle against Germany. In Churchill's words, "it was only after France had been flattened out that Britain, thanks to her island advantage, developed out of the pangs of defeat and the menace of annihilation a national resolve equal to that of Germany". Churchill's resolve was determined by the militant anti-fascist feeling of the British masses. The leader of the state came to express his people's will to fight. This enormously increased his popularity. As the people became more and more convinced that Churchill was taking vigorous steps to pursue the war, so he developed into a national wartime leader.

After the fall of France, Britain's leaders considered that "the defeat of Germany might be achieved by a combination of economic pressure, air attack on economic objectives in Germany and on German morale and the creation of widespread revolt in her conquered territories". The course of the war was to show that these methods were not enough to win victory. But Britain had nothing else to try at the time. The designers of this strategy probably realised how flimsy it was themselves, but they could think of nothing better. The official British historian of the Second World War J.R.M. Butler writes: "But how that victory was to be won could not be foreseen. What was required was not detailed forecasts of the future but practical recommendations as to how to keep our heads above water through the critical months immediately ahead."

During the summer of 1940, when Germany launched an air offensive against Britain, the RAF fought back resiliently. The British suffered heavy losses during the Battle of Britain, but German casualties were high too. The spirit of the British people was further tempered by the struggle.

As the Government continued the war after the fall of France, so Churchill's popularity grew among the masses, and this was gradually changing his position within the Conservative Party. The Conservatives were coming to see that Churchill was their only hope and that only by using his increasing prestige could they restore their party's influence among the people.

At the end of September 1940, Neville Chamberlain's

health deteriorated, he resigned and died soon afterwards. A new Conservative Party leader thus had to be elected. By then it was perfectly clear that the only conceivable candidate was Churchill. "Our secret weapon is Winston Churchill," the party chairman wrote in *The Sunday Times*. "In this our greatest hour we are fortunate indeed to be fighting under the incomparable leadership of a very great leader. Today Winston Churchill is not only the embodiment of the spirit of Britain. He is our bulldog leader in whom Britons, nay the whole world of free men, place their implicit trust."

Churchill was well aware that, if she remained in isolation, Britain was doomed to rapid defeat. Consequently, in addition to taking many determined measures to mobilise the country's resources to fight the enemy, expanding the munitions industry and creating armed forces on a massive scale, and making preparations to resist the German troops in case they managed to invade the British Isles, Churchill also sought frantically to acquire new allies. Germany had proved to be a powerful enemy, so that any new allies would have to be of equal or superior strength. There were only two such states that were not as yet involved in the war—the Soviet Union and the United States. Churchill naturally began to look in their direction. He intensified his personal correspondence with President Roosevelt, in which important Anglo-American affairs and the general world situation were discussed. No longer First Lord of the Admiralty, he now signed his letters "Former Naval Person". He was a great lover of fine phrases and the unusual touch, and so he was particularly fond, during the war years, of thinking up code names for the various conferences and military operations.

In his letters, Churchill constantly impressed upon Roosevelt that the United States had much to gain if Britain were victorious, whereas a German triumph would probably entail immense difficulties and dangers. He employed various means to prompt the USA to enter the war against Germany. When he was negotiating with Roosevelt a deal in which the USA would give Britain fifty old destroyers in exchange for bases in the Caribbean, he was anxious not so much to replenish the Royal Navy as to induce America to thus take a further step towards entering the war. The support, both moral and material (i.e. arms supplies), that the USA gave Britain in the second half of 1940 and the first half of 1941 was extremely valuable at that difficult moment.

The United States provided the support, but was in no hurry to enter the war. British leaders feared that the war might come to a tragic conclusion before America had decided finally and irrevocably to close ranks with Britain. This factor made it particularly important to make use of the Soviet Union in the struggle against Germany.

The Soviet Union had been prepared in 1939 to take action, in concert with Great Britain and other countries, against fascist Germany in order to prevent her from going to war or, if that failed, to bring about the aggressor's rapid defeat. The formation of an anti-fascist front of this kind had been thwarted mainly through the fault of the British Government, and no alliance had been set up between Britain and the USSR.

British historians and Churchill himself write a great deal about Britain's heroic struggle against Germany, completely alone after the fall of France. The situation is described in such a way that the responsibility for this isolation is virtually laid at the door of other states, and particularly the Soviet Union. Moreover, the reader is led to conclude that, no matter how many blunders may have been committed by the British Government previously, Britain redeemed them through her efforts during the period of "heroic isolation". But Denis Pritt really went to the heart of the matter when he wrote: "It was often made a boast that Britain 'stood alone' for so long in the War; we may justly be proud that, when the people had to stand alone, they stood resolutely; but it is a black mark for our ruling-class that, in a world in which most nations hated Fascism and wanted an end of it, they had so conducted the affairs of their country that for the moment no State in the world was prepared to stand with them! "

Churchill decided to rectify the principal error committed by Chamberlain and to rely on the support of the Soviet Union in the war against Germany. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the British Government took a straightforward and unambiguous decision to seek an equitable alliance with the USSR in the struggle against fascism. Such a course was obstructed both by the hostility of reactionary quarters in Britain and by the reluctance of the former appeasers to fight Germany in the company of the Soviet Union. The fact that, throughout his political career, Churchill had been, and still was, an enemy of socialism, and

primarily of the Soviet Union, did not help either. But sheer necessity compelled him to set aside his feelings. As a result, in the summer of 1940, Churchill despatched to the Soviet Union a man who was then regarded as being far to the left of the Labour Party, Stafford Cripps, who was instructed to improve Anglo-Soviet relations and to try to induce the Soviet Union to renounce its neutrality in the Second World War.

The Soviet Government showed Cripps's mission every consideration, but Soviet leaders were understandably cautious in their response to the British attempts to force the USSR to renounce her neutral standpoint and to tear up her treaty of non-aggression with Germany.

Intelligence reports informed Churchill that Germany was concentrating troops in the eastern border areas. It was a matter of grave concern to Churchill that that concentration of troops along the Soviet border might prove to be just a means of exerting military and political pressure on the USSR. Churchill desperately needed war between Germany and the USSR, since only such a war would provide Britain with a powerful ally and, consequently, the hope of not only surviving, but actually winning, the struggle against Germany. Soviet involvement in the war would enable Britain to hang on until the United States eventually sided with her. Acute necessity thus forced Churchill in 1940 and 1941 to wish for war between Germany and the USSR.

If, however, the issue is examined from a historical and class point of view, the conclusion is inescapable that, ever since the Soviet state first emerged, the British Establishment always regarded a conflict between Germany and the USSR as being both necessary and in accordance with their interests. This is adequately shown by the conversation that Churchill and Lloyd George had on the matter during the evening of 11 November 1918, the day when the armistice with Germany was signed at the end of the First World War. The Munich Agreement of 1938 is another indication of this. War between Germany and the USSR was thus in accord with the British imperialists' long-term strategy, and at the same time it meant salvation for Britain, which otherwise faced inevitable defeat in the war.

These indisputable facts and considerations should not be forgotten when examining the warnings that Churchill issued to Stalin in the spring of 1941 concerning the probability of a German attack on the USSR.

On 11 April 1941, Stafford Cripps wrote to the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Vyshinsky, that "unless they decided on immediate co-operation with the countries still opposing the Axis in the Balkans, the Russians would miss the last chance of defending their frontier with others". Cripps was thus demanding, in effect, that the USSR should immediately repudiate the non-aggression pact with Germany and attack her. Cripps's action naturally provided the Soviet Government with further grounds for wondering what lay behind Churchill's concern for the security of the Soviet Union.

It is now known that, while urging the Soviet Union to attack Germany, Churchill was simultaneously encouraging Germany to launch an offensive against the USSR. In 1963 a book was published in the USA on the subject of the wartime activities of the British Intelligence Centre in New York. The centre was run by the Canadian millionaire William Stephenson, who was in close touch with Churchill. The author, a former member of the staff, who made use of the centre's documents, stated that in the spring of 1941 the British Intelligence Centre and the American Federal Bureau of Investigation planted in the German Embassy in Washington the cryptic message: "From highly reliable source it is learned U.S.S.R. intend further military aggression instant Germany is embroiled in major operations." This is what British Intelligence regarded as "strategic deception material". Clearly, by planting this material Churchill's assistants were pursuing the sole aim of inciting Germany to attack the USSR.

It is difficult to say whether actions of this kind in any way influenced the German Government's decision to send the deputy leader of the Nazi Party, Rudolf Hess, to Britain in the spring of 1941 for the purpose of concluding a peace treaty with Britain and involving her in a war against the USSR on the side of Germany. However, the historian cannot afford to ignore this undercover intelligence activity when appraising Churchill's warnings to Stalin.

Churchill was informed of Hess's arrival one weekend. Wartime or not, he kept strictly to his daily routine, never sacrificing his weekends of comparative relaxation. He would usually leave London on Friday afternoons and travel to Chequers, the Prime Minister's official country residence, where he would spend the rest of Friday, Saturday and

Sunday, combining relaxation with work. Since the Germans regarded Churchill, not without reason, as a determined and dangerous enemy, it was assumed that they might try to eliminate him. There were fears that they might do this by dropping paratroops or bombs on Chequers when Churchill was there. A number of precautions were therefore taken. One of them was that, whenever there was a full moon and Chequers could be spotted fairly easily from the air Churchill was never there. At such times he would spend the weekend at the Ditchley estate owned by a friend of his, Ronald Tree. His hosts would invite for the weekend the people he needed to see. Churchill felt perfectly at home at Ditchley.

He was very fond of the cinema. During stays at either Ditchley or Chequers, he was usually shown a film of his choosing. It is said that *Lady Hamilton* was one of his favourite films at the time. He watched it six times during the war and saw to it that its director, Alexander Korda, was knighted.

On Sunday, 11 May 1941, Churchill was at Ditchley and was watching a Marx Brothers comedy. During the film a secretary came up to Churchill and told him that the Duke of Hamilton was on the telephone from Scotland. Churchill did not like being disturbed at such moments, and, although Hamilton was a friend of his, he asked one of the ministers sitting next to him to go to the telephone and find out what Hamilton wanted. It turned out that he wished to inform Churchill that Rudolf Hess had suddenly turned up in Scotland. It was incredible, but a fact neverhteless.

Hess had parachuted from a plane that he had flown himself and, when he was detained by the British authorities, declared that he wished to see the Duke of Hamilton, near whose estate he had landed. Representatives of the British Government and Hess embarked on negotiations that are still shrouded in secrecy even today. What is known for certain, however, is that Hess proposed that a peace treaty should be concluded between Germany and Britain, and that the two countries should then jointly attack the USSR.

Hess and those who had sent him imagined that the influence of the former appeasers in British politics and the economy was very strong and that these elements would, in one way or another, bring about peace between Britain and Germany. However, the German leaders had overestimated

the influence of the appeasers and underestimated the determination of the British people, who sought no peace with fascism, to say nothing of the correspondingly strong position of Churchill.

British leaders gathered from Hess that what they were really being offered was a peace that would make Britain a satellite of Germany. It was not difficult to foresee that, if Germany did defeat the USSR, the degree to which Britain was subject to Germany's wishes would grow beyond any limits. This made the proposal Hess had brought unacceptable to the rulers of Britain.

As for Churchill, it was unacceptable for the additional reason that Hess demanded Churchill's removal from office and the formation of a new government consisting of fascist sympathisers. There is no record of Churchill's reaction to the proposals, and he totally ignores the subject in his memoirs. It may, however, be confidently supposed that he realised how dangerous these proposals were to both Britain and himself, and recommended that they should be rejected.

Hess's proposals were not accepted by the British Government. Yet ministers preserved an enigmatic silence, obviously in order that the German leaders should not find out about the Government's real attitude towards Hess's mission. What were the reasons for this strange behaviour? Why did the British Government remain silent even though there were expressions of concern over Hess's mission both in Britain and elsewhere, and it was feared that, in the course of the negotiations with him, London was fixing the terms of a deal with Nazi Germany? This growing apprehension in world and British opinion could not have been to the liking of the Churchill Government, since it cast doubt on its determination to prosecute the war. Nevertheless, it did nothing to allay the apprehension.

Bearing in mind the facts relating to the matter, the balance of power in the world at the time, and the extent to which the British Government had an interest in war between Germany and the USSR, one can only conclude that the silence was very eloquent. Its purpose was to lead Hitler to believe that, if he attacked the Soviet Union, he would not have to fight a war on two fronts. Britain's *Labour Monthly* commented in 1941: "Why Churchill and the authorities deliberately chose to maintain a mysterious silence over Hess, when in fact the proposals had been turned down, remains

officially unexplained. Was this silence, with its suggestion of some possible complicity, a trap to lure Hitler forward on his desperate enterprise with the hope of some possible eventual support, only to turn on him with the most positive counter-thrust so soon as he had embarked on it? Had some bright wit of British diplomacy devised the scheme to use Hess as a boomerang and to catch Hitler with his own anti-Soviet bait with which he had so often in the past gulled the British ruling class? "

Hitler did not cancel or delay the planned attack on the Soviet Union. Since he and all Germany's military leaders undoubtedly embraced the principle of not trying to fight a war on two fronts, one can only conclude that Hitler swallowed the bait that was thrown to him. Churchill had complete control of British foreign policy, and this particular question was an important one; it must therefore be supposed that the "bright wit of British diplomacy" who cast out the bait to Hitler was none other than Churchill himself.

In the second half of the thirties, Hitler had fooled British statesmen, and particularly Neville Chamberlain, often enough. On this occasion, though, Hitler appears to have been very skilfully and, more important, catastrophically caught by Churchill.

In mid-June 1941, Churchill thought that the German attack on the USSR was only a few days, or maybe even hours, away. He saw quite clearly that Britain had to rely on the support of the Soviet Union which that attack would give her. He consulted Roosevelt, and the President agreed that the Soviet Union should be given help in the war against Germany, since this was required by the vital interests of Britain and the United States.

On 20 June 1941, Churchill went to Chequers for the weekend. Chequers is only about an hour's drive from London, and he usually set off on Friday, arriving there at roughly 4 p.m. Various members of the Government, highly-placed Americans and statesmen from several European countries normally came for the weekend too. Churchill made use of three secretaries at Chequers, and he was also accompanied by his personal assistant, Commander Thompson, a manservant and a different Thompson—his bodyguard, now assisted by another detective. Two film projectionists, three chauffeurs and an additional contingent of London

policemen to strengthen the security arrangements also went off to Chequers.

Upon arrival at Chequers, Churchill would first of all have a bath. His biographers say that he was very fond of bathing. Thompson, his bodyguard, tells of one occasion when they were travelling by train through Egypt (in the early twenties) and Churchill ordered the train to stop in the middle of the desert so that some hot water could be drawn off from the engine's boiler. When this had been done, he had a bath in full view of a host of astonished Arabs. After his bath at Chequers, he would put on what Inspector Thompson regarded as his rather comical but undoubtedly practical siren suit—overalls with numerous zip fasteners. He would come in to dinner wearing this suit, completely oblivous of how his guests were dressed. After dinner, he would go up to his room for a few minutes and would soon reappear before everyone in a brilliantly coloured dressing-gown of the sort that he usually wore when watching films. He had several such dressing-gowns. Once a film was over, he would usually go upstairs, summon his secretaries and set to work, which often lasted until 3 or 4 a.m.

During the weekend that included 22 June 1941, Churchill's guests at Chequers were Anthony Eden, Stafford Cripps, Lord Beaverbrook, Lord Cranborne and the American Ambassador, John Winant. The Ambassador brought Churchill a message from Roosevelt saying that the President would publicly support "any announcement that the Prime Minister might make welcoming Russia as an ally". Churchill's private secretary, John Colville, who was then in attendance at Chequers, says that on the Saturday, while strolling across the croquet lawn with Churchill, he asked whether he, the arch-anti-communist, did not regard it as a retreat from principle to support the Soviet Union in a war against Germany. Churchill answered, significantly: "Not at all. I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."

On Sunday, 22 June, Colville was awakened at 4 a.m. by a telephone call from London. The Foreign Office informed him that Germany had attacked the USSR. Churchill had given strict orders that his staff were not to wake him earlier than 8 a.m., no matter what had happened. The order could

only be set aside if the Germans started an invasion of Britain. Consequently, it was only at 8 a.m. that Colville informed Churchill that war had broken out between Germany and the USSR. Inspector Thompson says of the atmosphere at that moment at Chequers: "Churchill got word there that the Germans had crossed over into Joe Stalin's back yard and the implications of this were indeed most joyous to us all".

"It was difficult for Americans to understand the exquisite relief, the sudden release from pressure." Emrys Hughes comments that "Hitler's decision to attack Russia was a gift from the gods. This was the best news that Churchill had had for a long time".

Churchill ordered that the BBC should arrange to broadcast a speech he would make over the radio at 9 p.m. He spent the whole day drafting the speech, the main elements of which had long been clear to him.

In his speech, Churchill said: "I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial... I see advancing upon all this in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine.... I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts.... I see that small group of villainous men who plan, organise and launch this cataract of horrors upon mankind.... We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime." He went on to say: "We shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people....

"The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe." Churchill had thus declared that Britain would side with the USSR in the war against Germany, and had shown that this position was dictated by British interests.

In so doing, Churchill revealed himself as a major statesman. He saw where the fundamental interests of his country lay, and what policy would best promote them in the circumstances. He brought about an important change in British policy and his own activities. The switch was particularly significant since no one else in Britain was such a

consistent and determined enemy of the Soviet Union as Winston Churchill.

Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate the significance of Churchill's act. What else, after all, could he have done in the circumstances? Any other decision would have been courting ultimate defeat in the holocaust. Certainly Churchill effected an abrupt change in British policy, but only because of the hopelessness of Britain's position in the spring of 1941. The prominent Labour politician Michael Foot comments: "Before 22 June 1941, victory had been an elusive dream; thereafter it was brought within the range of practical calculation." The American diplomat and historian George Kennan writes: "The outbreak of war between Germany and Russia was the first ray of hope Englishmen had seen in this war....

"As it was, Western statesmen considered that the entire fate of the war depended on the readiness and ability of Russia to stand up to the German attack."

In order to fully understand the attitude that Churchill adopted towards the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, one must bear in mind that in the radio broadcast referred to above he also said: "The Nazi régime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism.... No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it."

This statement is crucial. Churchill announced to the whole world that he remained a consistent enemy of the USSR's social system. He tailored his own plans to fit into the framework of the projected alliance with the USSR. He thus managed to pacify the reactionary elements in Britain and the USA as regards the nature of his policy towards the Soviet Union. Needless to say, the position he had adopted had the effect of complicating the formation of an alliance with the USSR. The contradiction between Churchill's readiness to enter into an alliance with the USSR and his intention to maintain his hostility towards the Soviet social system became fully apparent inside the anti-Hitler coalition, in which the Churchill Government played an important part.

The Soviet Union's entry into the war encouraged Britain with the prospect that the German war machine would be considerably weakened in the fields of Russia. But British statesmen did not imagine that the USSR would finally

triumph over Germany, and so were in no hurry to offer any practical help. On 12 July, an agreement was signed providing for joint action by the Soviet and British Governments in the war against Germany, whereby both sides pledged to give one another assistance and support of all kinds in the war and undertook not to conduct negotiations or conclude a separate truce or peace with Germany. The Anglo-Soviet alliance was gradually taking shape.

Churchill was not always concerned to assist the process. For example, during the discussions preceding the signing of the agreement of 12 July, Churchill proposed that, in case the Soviet Union stood firm nevertheless, the agreement should contain a paragraph providing for a revision of her borders at a peace conference after the war. Churchill wished to detach from the USSR the territories that became part of it in 1939 and 1940. The British War Cabinet did not support the idea, but it is significant that Churchill moved it in the first place.

In August 1941, Churchill met Roosevelt in order to plan their joint conduct in the new circumstances. This was the first of the wartime conferences between the US President and the British Prime Minister. Churchill later calculated that he spent a total of 120 days with Roosevelt at meetings of various kinds during the war years—a remarkable fact of modern history.

It was decided at the meeting to assist the USSR by supplying armaments and strategic raw materials. However, the decision was only adopted in principle; giving effect to it was made dependent on the course taken by the struggle on the Soviet-German front.

Churchill and Roosevelt drew up the Atlantic Charter, declaring in it that Britain and the USA were seeking the just and democratic peace that was to follow the victory over Germany and her allies. It subsequently became clear that this was not an expression of the two Governments' real intentions, but was just a propaganda appeal in order to secure public support in waging the war.

The meeting between the British Prime Minister and the US President brought out into the open the acute political and economic antagonisms between the two countries. Churchill staunchly resisted American attempts to encroach the British economic and colonial positions. The two statesmen also held general discussions about the sort of

world they would like to see after the war. They agreed unreservedly that, at the end of the war, all states should disarm, but Britain and the USA were to retain their armaments and would dictate the postwar peace settlement for "all the men in all the lands".

It was also said that the Soviet Union too was to be disarmed, so that its fate as well was to depend on Britain and the United States. In other words, plans were worked out to establish Anglo-American domination of the postwar world. The leaders of Britain and the USA were drawing up these plans while the USSR was bearing the brunt of the war and America had yet not entered it.

The viewpoint of the USA prevailed in many respects at the conference, which reflected the balance of power in the Anglo-American bloc. The two politicians were very jealous of each other. At the end of the meeting, each of them immediately asked his advisers: "What did *he* think of me?" Roosevelt considered that he had looked the more impressive. As he told a friend, "I had thirteen warships at that meeting, but Winston had only two or three. One of his broke down, and I had to lend him a destroyer!"

Since Churchill did not as yet believe in the Soviet Union's ability to survive the armed struggle against Germany, he regarded it as particularly important to secure the rapid entry of America into the war. In the Far East there was growing tension in relations between America and Japan. The Japanese military were taking advantage of the war in Europe in order to carry out aggression in Asia and the Pacific, which threatened to bring about war between Japan and the USA. Churchill realised that the clash of the two Powers' interests could lead to an armed conflict. In view of the alliance already existing between Japan and Germany the conflict would automatically give rise to a declaration of war between Germany and the USA. Churchill therefore did all he could to prompt the American Government to take a tough line in relations with Japan.

But even without his efforts war in the Far East was clearly in the air, and it began with the Japanese attack on the American Fleet at Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941. Simultaneously Japan attacked the British in Malaya. On 8 December the British Parliament voted unanimously to declare war on Japan. The war between Japan and the USA led to a declaration of war on the United States by Germany

and Italy on 11 December 1941. As the American Senator Gerald Nye commented, Pearl Harbour was "just what Britain had planned for us". Churchill was triumphant. He had worked hard to see that the USA entered the war against Germany, and now that he had both the USSR and the USA as allies, he realised that Britain would survive after all and that she now had a real chance of winning the war.

It was the British Establishment's traditional policy to wage war, wherever possible, by proxy. For centuries, Britain had fought colonial wars, using armies recruited from the local populace of the colonial countries in order to gain new colonies and enslave more peoples. In Europe, using her financial and economic power, Britain had formed against her enemies coalitions of European Powers which would then supply the infantry that bore the brunt of any struggle. The comparatively heavy losses that Britain sustained in the First World War strengthened the determination of Churchill and other British leaders to transfer the bulk of the fighting against the Axis on to the shoulders of Britain's allies. The idea was that Britain's part in the war would be played by her Air Force and Navy.

Now that it had the USSR and the USA as allies, Churchill's Government decided to make the greatest use of its armed forces in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. In these areas the British Government was fighting a colonial war to bolster its imperialist interests. The task of defeating Germany's main forces, which were deployed in Europe, was shifted wholly on to the Soviet Union. It was Churchill's strategy to avoid engaging Germany's main forces in Western Europe and to fight in the outlying areas, weakening the enemy by local thrusts and sapping his strength through a naval blockade and aerial bombardment of his industrial areas and major centres of population.

Right in the first weeks of the war, the Soviet Government had to remind the British Government to honour its commitments as an ally and to supply the assistance promised in Churchill's speech of 22 June 1941 and then in the agreement of 12 July. The best help that could be given would be the actual participation of Britain's armed forces in the fight against Germany in Europe. Everything indicated that Britain should open up in the west a second front against Germany in Europe. This was the major fear of the German leaders and could vastly shorten the war and reduce the

casualties. But this ran counter to the British Government's wish to fight through its allies, and so Churchill was for several years the chief opponent of the Soviet Government's justifiable demand that Britain and the United States should open up a second front in Western Europe.

The Soviet Government raised the question of a second front in Europe with the British Government on more than one occasion—first in 1941 and then in 1942. Churchill stubbornly refused to comply with this request. He planned to use Britain's armed forces elsewhere and for other purposes. American leaders took a somewhat different view of the question of a second front. For a number of reasons, they supported the opening of a second front in 1942. In April 1942, Harry Hopkins, the US President's personal representative, and General Marshall, the US army Chief of Staff, arrived in London and discussed with Churchill and other British leaders the question of landing troops in Western Europe. It was agreed that a small Anglo-American force should be landed on the continent in 1942 and that the main force would arrive the following year.

The decision had been taken against Churchill's wishes, and soon he and other British leaders did, in effect, abandon it. The Americans felt that the British had deceived them. General Ismay writes in his memoirs that everyone had been full of enthusiasm during the talks, and no one had registered any disagreement. "Our American friends," he records, "went happily homewards under the mistaken impression that we had committed ourselves to both Roundup and Sledgehammer," the landings in Europe in 1942 and 1943. Churchill had deliberately misled the American representatives, and Ismay observes that the Americans "felt that we had broken faith with them". There was a good deal of duplicity in Churchill's attitude towards the second front, and considerably more where the Soviet Government was concerned than in the case of the Americans.

Churchill's personal physician, Lord Moran, who remained close to him for 25 years (ever since May 1940), subsequently wrote of him: "To postpone that evil day [the opening of a second front], all his arts, all his eloquence, all his great experience were spent." According to Moran, the Secretary of the War Cabinet said that delaying the opening of a second front was "his most solid achievement after what he did in 1940". The Secretary was undoubtedly reflecting

the view held by his chief. Moran comments that Churchill himself "never claimed credit for postponing the invasion of France". He immediately adds: "Was his silence a kind of escape clause or insurance in case posterity held him responsible for prolonging the war? "

Although Churchill had no wish to undertake a major operation in Western Europe, he could not ignore the desire of the British people to see their country honourably fulfilling its obligations to the USSR. British Communists and other progressive people in Britain were demanding that the Government should honour its commitment to open a second front. Numerous demonstrations and rallies were held in various towns, calling for a second front to be started forthwith. The nation realised that Britain's failure to discharge her obligations was dangerous for Britain herself, let alone the USSR.

In May 1942 the Soviet Government informed the British authorities that it was essential to divert at least 40 German divisions from the Eastern Front in 1942. In reply, Churchill talked at length about the conditions of landing in Western Europe, and he said that such a landing would best be carried out in the Pas-de-Calais area, Cherbourg and Brest, that control of the sea would be necessary and that air cover would be needed for the operation, but he stubbornly declined to accept any specific commitments as regards the timing and scale of the landing. During the Anglo-Soviet negotiations on the question of a second front held on 21-26 May, Churchill was, according to the American historian Herbert Feis, "cautiously indefinite. He refrained from direct and positive answers to Molotov's urgent inquiries as to whether and when the United States and Britain would start an operation against Germany in the west". At that time, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, was about to leave for Washington. Churchill suggested that on his return journey to the USSR he should stop over in London, and he promised that he would then give a more definite reply in the light of the Washington discussions on the matter.

On 30 May, during the negotiations with Roosevelt and his advisers, the Soviet Foreign Minister raised the question of opening a second front in 1942. According to Samuel Cross, the Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at Harvard University, who acted as interpreter, "The President then put to General Marshall the query whether develop-

ments were clear enough so that we could say to Mr. Stalin that we are preparing a second front. 'Yes,' replied the General. The President then authorized Mr. Molotov to inform Mr. Stalin that we expect the formation of a second front this year". In the course of further talks with the Americans, and subsequently with the British, approval was given to a communiqué announcing that the USA and Britain were committed to opening a second front in Europe in 1942. The official American historians of the Second World War do not doubt that the Washington talks in May 1942 resulted in this commitment. Maurice Matloff and Edwin Snell write that the Soviet Union was given "a strong commitment to open a 'second front' in 1942". Why this promise was given is made clear by the telegram Roosevelt sent Churchill on 6 June in which he said that he viewed "with great concern the Russian front...."

Churchill was also apprehensively following the gigantic battle that was raging on the Soviet-German front. He was afraid that, if the Soviet Government decided that it could not count on receiving any military assistance in the near future from Britain and the USA, it might prefer to leave the war and make peace with Germany rather than fight in isolation. Churchill's fears were increased by the fact that in 1941, and particularly in 1942, the situation on the Soviet-German front was extremely bad for the USSR.

When the Soviet Foreign Minister returned to London from Washington, the British Government gave its agreement to the creation of a second front in Europe in 1942. The joint Anglo-Soviet communiqué included the sentence: "In the course of the conversations full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942." The Soviet-American communiqué contained the same sentence. Both communiqués were issued on 11 June 1942. Britain and the USA thus publicly gave the Soviet Union a precise and definite commitment to open a second front in 1942.

Churchill's pledge to open a second front in 1942 and his agreement to the publication of the communiqué amounted to a piece of calculated deception. This was shown by later events and is clear to us now from documents that have since been published. Churchill had no intention of discharging the obligation that he had accepted on Britain's behalf. This is corroborated by the fact that, while the Anglo-Soviet

communiqué was being drafted, Churchill handed Molotov a memorandum which he, and subsequently a number of bourgeois historians, later used in order to justify the British Government's unscrupulous attitude towards its commitments regarding the second front. The presentation of this document meant that the British Government, while resolving to deceive the Soviet Union, was already preparing the ground for backtracking on what had been agreed. The memorandum stated: "We are making preparations for a landing on the Continent in August or September 1942.... It is impossible to say in advance whether the situation will be such as to make this operation feasible when the time comes. We can therefore give no promise in the matter, but provided that it appears sound and sensible we shall not hesitate to put our plans into effect."

Since Churchill and the historians who seek to justify him regard as important in the document only the reservation that is expressed, and do not attach any significance to the parts that confirm the commitment to open a second front, this can only mean that the memorandum was consciously drafted so that it could be used to justify evasion of the commitment proclaimed in the Soviet-British communiqué.

The American General Wedemeyer, who participated alongside Hopkins and Marshall in the talks on the second front that were held in April 1942, writes: "The British were masters in negotiations—particularly were they adept in the use of phrases or words which were capable of more than one meaning or interpretation. Here was the setting, with all the trappings of a classical Machiavellian scene. I am not suggesting that the will to deceive was a personal characteristic of any of the participants. But when matters of the state were involved, our British opposite numbers had elastic scruples.... What I witnessed was the British power of diplomatic finesse in its finest hour, a power that had been developed over centuries of successful international intrigue, cajolery, and tacit compulsions."

British policy, which often makes use of deceit and hypocrisy in order to achieve its aims, has given rise to the peculiarly English term "humbug". English dictionaries define the word as meaning "an imposition under fair pretences" or "a spirit of deception or trickery". The well-known British politician Konni Zilliacus has the following to say on the use of humbug in British politics: "British contempt for logic

often results in cherishing two incompatible ideas simultaneously, one as a moral alibi and basis for speech and emotion, the other as a working belief and basis for action. It is this 'double-mindedness' which the Continental unduly simplifies when he calls it British hypocrisy. But it must be admitted that its practical consequences are often indistinguishable from those produced by hypocrisy, and that the transition from unconscious self-deception to deliberate duplicity is all too easy."

In the memoirs about his early life, Churchill once wrote that, when he was twenty, he "had no idea in those days of the enormous and unquestionably helpful part that humbug plays in the social life of great peoples dwelling in a state of democratic freedom". In 1942, Churchill was not only perfectly well acquainted with the role of humbug in British politics, but he himself provided an extremely cynical example of its use in the form of the memorandum on the second front handed to the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Historians who really seek the truth and who draw their conclusions from deeds rather than words ignore Churchill's memorandum and state that in the spring of 1942 Britain and the USA gave their word to the Soviet Union to open a second front that year. They are not all Marxist historians either. The British bourgeois historian W.N. Medlicott, refers, for instance, to "the second front that had been promised to the Russians in 1942".

In July 1942, Churchill and Roosevelt unilaterally revised their commitment to a second front. Instead of a landing in Europe, they decided to invade North Africa in 1942. This was a flagrant violation of their commitments as allies to the USSR, and Churchill was very worried about how the Soviet Government would react to it. The concern was shared by all the senior British leaders. On 7 July 1942, A. Cadogan noted in his diary: "Warned A. [Anthony Eden] of P.M.'s idea of stopping *preparations* for 2nd Front and telling Russians frankly. We *can't* do this. It will have bad effect. Besides, we must be *prepared* in *case* there is a break, when we should want to slip on to the Continent without delay." Churchill himself undertook the delicate task of informing the Soviet Government of the decision. In August 1942 he travelled to Moscow for this purpose.

It is interesting to read Churchill's description of his mood as he flew to the Soviet capital: "I pondered on my

mission to this sullen, sinister Bolshevik State I had once tried so hard to strangle at its birth, and which, until Hitler appeared, I had regarded as the mortal foe of civilised freedom. What was it my duty to say to them now? General Wavell, who had literary inclinations, summed it all up in a poem. There were several verses, and the last line of each was, 'No Second Front in nineteen forty-two'." It goes without saying that the feelings that the British Prime Minister then harboured towards the Soviet Union had a negative effect on his position over the second front, and on the establishment of good relations between the two Allies.

In Moscow, Churchill tried to convince the Soviet Government, firstly, that Britain was in no position to open a second front in 1942, and, secondly, (he now referred to the memorandum he had given Molotov) that Britain had never undertaken any such commitment. Churchill was not put out by the fact that the Anglo-Soviet communiqué of 11 June 1942 provided a firm record of Britain's commitment here (discounting the memorandum), or by the fact that his very trip to Moscow, in order to justify the dishonoured commitment only served to confirm both the existence of the pledge to create a second front in 1942, and its violation by Britain and the USA. If this had not been the case, why would Churchill have gone to Moscow? The American historian Trumbull Higgins, who made a special study of Churchill's position over the second front and wrote a book on the subject, mocks Churchill's claim that "his conscience is 'clear', since he did 'not deceive or mislead Stalin' ". Higgins concludes that Churchill "deliberately deceived his Russian ally".

The Soviet Government told Churchill that it took the view that the British and American Governments were blatantly evading their commitments by refusing to open a second front in 1942.

On 13 August, Stalin handed Churchill a memorandum summarising the positions adopted by the two sides over the issue. "It will be recalled," the memorandum stated, "that the decision to open a second front in Europe in 1942 was reached at the time of Molotov's visit to London, and found expression in the agreed Anglo-Soviet Communiqué released on June 12 last.

"It will be recalled further that the opening of a second front in Europe was designed to divert German forces from

the Eastern Front to the West, to set up in the West a major centre of resistance to the German fascist forces and thereby ease the position of the Soviet troops on the Soviet-German front in 1942....

"It will be readily understood that the British Government's refusal to open a second front in Europe in 1942 delivers a moral blow to Soviet public opinion, which had hoped that the second front would be opened, complicates the position of the Red Army at the front and injures the plans of the Soviet High Command.

"I say nothing of the fact that the difficulties in which the Red Army is involved through the refusal to open a second front in 1942 are bound to impair the military position of Britain and the other Allies.

"I and my colleagues believe that the year 1942 offers the most favourable conditions for a second front in Europe, seeing that nearly all the German forces—and their crack troops, too—are tied down on the Eastern Front, while only negligible forces, and the poorest, too, are left in Europe. It is hard to say whether 1943 will offer as favourable conditions for opening a second front as 1942. For this reason we think that it is possible and necessary to open a second front in Europe in 1942. Unfortunately I did not succeed in convincing the British Prime Minister of this, while Mr. Harriman, the U.S. President's representative at the Moscow talks, fully supported the Prime Minister."

The Soviet Government noted the British and American intention to make landings in 1942 in North Africa, as well as Churchill's assurance (which was also false and was not put into effect subsequently) that British and American forces would mount a full-scale invasion of Western Europe in 1943.

Churchill feared that, in the face of this unscrupulous behaviour on the part of the allies, the Soviet Union might conclude a separate peace with Germany. But he saw no signs of this in Moscow and was delighted to announce to the British War Cabinet: "There was never at any time the slightest suggestion of their not fighting on." Churchill had been very worried just before he left for Moscow, but, when he returned, the King congratulated him with the following words: "As a bearer of unwelcome news your task was a very disagreeable one, but I congratulate you heartily on the skill with which you accomplished it."

In Moscow, Churchill had tried unsuccessfully to justify

his former hypocrisy, but took a hypocritical stand once again on the question of the second front. The leaders of the Soviet Government acted very differently. Churchill was informed of the position on the Soviet-German front, of the condition of the Red Army and of the plan for the counter-offensive that was later to produce the great Soviet victory at Stalingrad. Thus, the Soviet Government was very frank in its relations with its British ally. On 15 August. Churchill informed London and President Roosevelt: "In my private conversation with Stalin he revealed to me other solid reasons for his confidence, including a counter-offensive on a great scale," and on the following day he said of Stalin in a telegram: "He gave me a full account of the Russian position."

The second front was not the only problem that complicated the development of the alliance between the USSR and Britain during the war. The alliance was severely damaged by the desire of Churchill and his Government to withhold recognition of the Soviet borders as they were in 1941 and thus to pave the way for detaching a number of territories from the USSR as part of the future peace settlement. The Soviet Government was aware of the intentions of the British Government and so constantly raised the matter with it.

The talks held in Moscow in December 1941 with Eden, who had by then replaced Halifax as Foreign Secretary, showed that the Soviet Government's apprehension on the subject was well founded. When asked whether the British Government guaranteed that during the peace settlement it would support the Soviet Union's demand for the recognition of its 1941 frontiers, Eden did not make a positive response. Strange as it may seem, Eden referred to the Atlantic Charter. "I used the Atlantic Charter as an argument against him [Stalin]," he said in a cable to Halifax, who was now Britain's Ambassador to the USA. In this connection, Stalin declared to Eden: "I thought that the Atlantic Charter was directed against those people who were trying to establish world dominion. It now looks as if the Atlantic Charter was directed against the USSR." He went on to say: "All we ask for is to restore our country to its former frontiers. We must have these for our security and safety.... I want to emphasise the point that if you decline to do this, it looks as if you were creating a possibility for the dismemberment of the

Soviet Union." He added that he was "surprised and amazed at Mr. Churchill's Government taking up this position. It is practically the same as that of the Chamberlain Government."

The American Government shared Churchill's view of the question of the Soviet Union's borders. On one occasion, when Churchill, fearing for the future of the alliance with the USSR and realising the legitimacy and justice of the Soviet Government's demand, had told the Americans that it would perhaps be better to accede to that demand, Washington made a categorically negative response. The formation of an alliance between Britain and the USSR had thus to contend with the totally unjustified position on the subject adopted by London and Washington.

Since it wished to strengthen and develop relations with Britain, the Soviet Government made a major concession, deciding at that time not to insist on its just demand concerning the frontiers and to sign with Britain a treaty of alliance that made no mention of the problem. A treaty between the Soviet Union and Great Britain binding both sides to provide each other with military assistance and support of all kinds in the war against Germany and her satellites and determining the relations between the two sides after the war was signed on 26 May 1942 in the British Foreign Office, in Churchill's presence. The treaty was an important and positive factor in Anglo-Soviet relations. The conclusion of the Anglo-Soviet treaty strengthened the international political positions of the USSR and Britain, and cemented the anti-Hitler coalition.

When, at the end of 1941, the British Government saw that the Soviet Union had not been defeated and would continue the struggle, it signed with the USSR and with the USA a protocol providing for the delivery to the USSR of British and American armaments and strategic materials. Admittedly, the deliveries did not begin immediately and, at the times of the greatest hardship for the USSR, they were clearly inadequate, but it would be wrong to deny their undoubtedly positive effect on the Soviet Union and its armed forces. In 1942, when the German troops were rapidly advancing towards the Volga, the British Government interrupted the supply of war materials. The deliveries were curtailed not so much by the difficulties of escorting convoys of merchant ships to the USSR's nothernmost ports, as

Churchill and British historians like to claim, as by the fact that in Britain there were influential circles which did not like the alliance with the USSR and hindered the normal development of relations between the two allies. Their influence affected the stance adopted by Churchill.

During his first visit to Moscow, Churchill had learnt a great deal that he found both pleasant and unpleasant. He had seen that the Soviet Union would continue the struggle against Germany, and this was good news for the British and US Governments. At the same time, Churchill had realised that the Soviet-German front was the one that mattered most in the war, that the Soviet Union would probably hold firm and that its contribution towards defeating the common enemy would thus be decisive. This would have very important and far-reaching consequences in the future and, naturally, was not to Churchill's liking. In view of these foreign policy considerations, Churchill badly needed a striking British victory somewhere.

He also had domestic political reasons for wanting a victory. The military failures and defeats suffered by Britain in 1942 had seriously weakened the position of the Churchill Government. In Britain there was growing discontent with the conduct of the war, and this feeling posed a grave threat to the Government. Lord Moran writes that his diaries for 1942 refer constantly to "Winston's conviction that his life as Prime Minister could be saved only by a victory in the field". The minister Brendan Bracken, who was close to Churchill, told Moran in September 1942 that "if we are beaten in this battle [in North Africa], it's the end of Winston".

British troops were fighting, with spasmodic success, against the German and Italian forces in North Africa. In terms of their scale and significance, these operations could not stand any comparison with the battles that were being fought on the Soviet-German front. Nevertheless, when, at the end of 1942, the British troops went over to the offensive and defeated the Germans and Italians at El Alamein, Churchill proceeded to magnify the event out of all proportion. He referred to it as a "great victory", had the churchbells of Britain rung for the first time during the war, and subsequently claimed that the battle of El Alamein "marked in fact the turning of 'the Hinge of Fate'" and was the most decisive battle fought on land in support of the Allies' interests.

The American General Wedemeyer writes that "Churchill grossly exaggerated the magnitude of the Allied victory in Africa." Clearly, he did this deliberately, and for three reasons: firstly, he sought to diminish the importance of the Soviet-German front and the Soviet victory at Stalingrad; secondly, he wished to strengthen his Government's position at home and, consequently, his own position as Prime Minister; and, thirdly, he was showing the world the major contribution that Britain was making to the struggle against Germany and Italy so as to dispel the bad impression created by the policy that Britain had pursued *vis-a-vis* the fascist aggressors just before the war. In 1963 the British author John Mander wrote that people in Britain nowadays took the following view of the policy of appeasement: "Whatever unrealism Britain displayed in the thirties, the British people made up for it by their stand against Hitler.... That is the official version. It is flattering enough. It admits the stain of Munich. But it argues that it was wiped out by the Battle of Britain and Alamein. Britain has purged herself. Let foreigners divert their attention from her hour of shame to her hour of glory." This is precisely the conclusion towards which Churchill leads his readers by vastly inflating the importance of the battle of El Alamein.

The historical fact is that it was not the ringing of England's bells in honour of El Alamein, but the unprecedented heroism of the Soviet soldiers at Stalingrad that really marked the start of the great change that came over the Second World War. The outcome of the battle of Stalingrad meant that the war would now be won by the Allies. This brought to a close the "survival at all costs" stage in British politics. It was now clear that Britain had survived and that Churchill's actions as Prime Minister had helped to remove the deadly danger that had overshadowed the country in 1940-41.

During that menacing period, Churchill had risen to the occasion. It was his finest hour. However, a long and arduous path still had to be covered before victory was achieved. As 1942 slid into 1943, the policy of the Churchill Government entered a new phase.

Chapter 10

At the Final Stage of the War

After spending some time reflecting on what he had seen and heard in Moscow, Churchill reached an alarming conclusion. He realised that the Soviet Union would be among the victors and so would emerge from the war not broken and weakened, as he and his associates had previously imagined, but as a force to be reckoned with. This turn of events would inevitably have a decisive effect on the course of the war at its final stage. A powerful Soviet Union, Churchill thought, would undoubtedly press for the total destruction of fascism, and this could give rise to rapid development of the revolutionary movement in Europe and throughout the world. The victory of the Soviet Union in the war would enormously strengthen the cause of socialism, and the fact that the USSR would liberate a number of European countries from fascism would further stimulate the development of socialist revolution in Europe. "By 1943," we read in the *Labour Monthly*, "panic seized the Western rulers at the prospect of the fall of fascism and the victory of communism." Churchill was more alarmed than anyone.

In October 1942, before the German forces had been defeated at Stalingrad, Churchill drafted a memorandum and circulated it to the members of the War Cabinet. He wrote: "My thoughts rest primarily in Europe—the revival of the glory of Europe—the parent continent of the modern nations and of civilisation. It would be a measureless disaster if

Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe. Hard as it is to say now, I trust that the European family may act unitedly as one under a Council of Europe." These lines were written during the battle of Stalingrad.

Then and later during the war, Churchill did, of course, frequently send official messages to the Soviet Government in which he expressed his joy at the Soviet victories. This was done for the sake of form and was a further instance of Churchillian hypocrisy. His true feelings and intentions were set out in the secret October memorandum that he wrote for the War Cabinet.

Churchill went on to say in the menorandum: "I hope to see a Council consisting of perhaps ten units, including the former great powers, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Dutchmen, Belgians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Poles, Czechs, and Turks." The reference to the former Great Powers meant that the bloc which was to operate against the USSR would, as Churchill envisaged it, include Germany and Italy. He did not regard France as a Great Power, listing the French alongside the Dutch and Turks. Thus, Britain's postwar foreign policy during the cold war period, a policy that was clearly marked by its anti-Soviet thrust, was formulated by Churchill at the end of 1942, long before the bloc of fascist states had been smashed through the combined efforts of the anti-Hitler coalition.

In late 1942 and early 1943, victory over Germany was still a long way off, to say nothing of victory over Japan. The vast scale of the battles that were being fought on the Soviet-German front convinced Churchill that it was vital for Britain to maintain her alliance with the USSR, since victory was unthinkable without it. After Stalingrad, Churchill and his Government did their utmost to place the heaviest burden in the war on to the Soviet Union so as to debilitate it as much as possible. At the same time they speeded up the drafting of the basis for the postwar peace settlement between the members of the anti-Hitler coalition, in an effort to tie the Soviet Union down beforehand.

The Churchill Government continued to ignore its commitments as regards a second front. In Moscow in August 1942, Churchill had assured the Soviet Government that the second front would be created in 1943. This turned out to be sheer fraud. Realising this, the Soviet Government registered

a strong protest, saying that the sustained failure by Britain and the USA to honour their obligations over the second front was causing the Soviet Government to question"the preservation of its confidence in its Allies". The Soviet Government knew that Churchill was playing a double game and was deliberately deceiving his ally. Churchill for his part was much upset to realise that his manoeuvring had failed.

After the battle of the Kursk Bulge in the summer of 1943 the turn in the tide of the Second World War was confirmed once and for all, and the Red Army began its relentless march westwards, driving the invaders from its own territory and bringing freedom to the peoples of Europe. This cast a different light on the question of the second front. As the Soviet troops moved westwards, politicians in London and Washington gradually saw that they needed to speed up the formation of a second front—not in order to help their Soviet allies, but so as to land their forces in Western Europe before it was liberated by the Red Army. The Teheran Conference, held between the heads of state of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain at the end of November 1943, took a final decision that Anglo-American forces would invade Western Europe in May 1944. Churchill put up a fight even at Teheran, but, under pressure from the USSR and the USA, he acquiesced to the creation of the new front.

Churchill's retreat is explained by the fact that by the end of 1943 the balance of power inside the anti-Hitler coalition had undergone a radical change and was not in Britain's favour. The Soviet Union was the main strike force in the fight against Nazi Germany and her satellites, and so the Soviet role in determining postwar development was constantly growing. The United States was marshalling its armed forces and boosting the munitions industry, so that US influence in the coalition was also on the increase. British influence could only wane. At the end of 1943, Prime Minister Jan Smuts of the Union of South Africa, a major politician within the British Empire, told Britain's leaders that "there will be two colossi after the war. In Europe, Russia.... The other colossus will be North America." Churchill knew this, and it embittered and irritated him. According to the British historian D. Dilks, Churchill remarked several times during the Teheran Conference that he had come to realise for the first time "what a small nation Britain was". "There I sat," he said, "with the great Russian bear on one side of me,

with paws outstretched, and on the other side the great American buffalo, and between the two sat the poor little English donkey who was the only one ... who knew the right way home." However, as the war moved inexorably towards its climax, he had increasingly to reckon with the views of the others, and he was less and less able to impose his own ideas upon them.

Throughout his life, Churchill was a supporter of close relations between Britain and the United States. His first comment to this effect dates right from the beginning of the twentieth century. Naturally, very few people took much notice of him at that time. Churchill's biographers say that his liking for the USA derived from the fact that he was half-American by birth. This was probably of some significance to Churchill However, when formulating his own position on the matter, he was most influenced by the fact that it was, as he saw it, in Britain's interests to avoid enmity between the two countries, and that Britain should act in concert with the USA against their common enemies. Churchill took the view that in the twentieth century both Britain and the USA faced, by and large, the same rivals. In Europe there was Germany, in the Far East there was Japan, and in the world at large there was socialism and the revolutionary movement.

During the Second World War, when Britain so desperately needed US support, Churchill naturally wrote and said a great deal about his affection and love for the USA, about the common destiny of the English-speaking peoples and about the need for the two countries to walk side by side in order to attain their chief aims. When he was pondering Anglo-American relations at that time, Churchill based his approach not only on his awareness of inter-imperialist antagonisms, i.e. the rivalry between Britain and the USA, on the one hand, and Germany, Italy and Japan, on the other, but also on the fundamental antagonism in the modern world, the struggle between socialism and capitalism. Eden was undoubtedly expressing Churchill's view when he said to Roosevelt on 14 March 1943 that Russia was "our most difficult problem", and observed that "England would probably be too weak to face Russia alone diplomatically".

The wartime co-operation between Britain and the USA was very close indeed. No official treaty of alliance was concluded between the two countries, but they were cer-

tainly allies in practice. The relations between them were far closer than those between Britain and the USSR, which had actually signed such a treaty. Britain received from the United States considerably more material assistance than the Soviet Union ever got from both allies combined. The military efforts of Britain and the USA were quite closely co-ordinated, thanks to the existence of the Anglo-American Combined Staff. Joint bodies had also been set up to distribute the armaments, equipment and strategic materials, although these organisations did not work very efficiently. The political contacts between the two Governments were closer and more frequent than the contacts between them and the Soviet Government.

All this goes to show that there were certain tendencies encouraging the development of the increasingly close relations between Britain and the USA that Churchill tirelessly urged. But completely opposite tendencies were also at work: the antagonisms between British and American imperialism were becoming deeper and more intense. The more the balance of power between the two countries swung against Britain, and the stronger the tendency in US policies to establish American domination of the postwar world, the greater was the intensity of Anglo-American antagonism. The USA took advantage of the Lend-Lease assistance to Britain so as to force her to accept conditions that were unfavourable to British overseas trade. The United States interfered in Britain's monetary policies and tried to regulate the size of Britain's currency reserves. Scant attention was paid to British interests during the development of nuclear weapons, which was carried on jointly by Britain and the USA. America laid claim to Middle East oil, which had previously been the undisputed preserve of Britain. There was also a mounting struggle for influence between Britain and the USA in the Arab world, and particularly in Saudi Arabia.

The American Establishment was endeavouring to dissolve the British Empire, issuing rhetorical demands for the granting of independence to India. The real aim was not to bring about true independence, but to create a situation in which American imperialism could exert its influence on a nominally independent India through economic and other methods, squeezing out the British colonialists. Roosevelt's approach to Churchill on the matter greatly angered the British Prime Minister. In December 1944, Churchill wrote to

Eden: "Pray remember my declaration in a speech of November, 1942, against liquidation of the British Empire. If the Americans want to take Japanese islands which they have conquered, let them do so with our blessing and any form of words that may be agreeable to them. But 'Hands off the British Empire' is our maxim." American leaders watched Churchill's imperial ways with some amusement, since they knew how much Britain depended on the USA. After his Casablanca meeting with Churchill, Roosevelt remarked in Eisenhower's presence: "Isn't it great to have that delightful old Tory on our side? "

The United States made use of the wartime circumstances to squeeze British goods and influence out of Latin America. Churchill was inclined to offer only token resistance to America here. "When you consider the formidable questions," he wrote to Eden in February 1944, "on which we may have difficulty with the United States, oil, dollar balances, shipping, policy to France, Italy, Spain, the Balkans, etc. I feel that we ought to try to make them feel we are their friends and helpers in the American sphere."

As he thought about the postwar world set-up, Churchill developed, firstly, the idea of creating a number of federations in Europe and throughout the world, and, secondly, the concept of a close Anglo-American alliance which would, he imagined, guarantee Anglo-American domination of the postwar world. He told the Americans that the plan for setting up regional associations in Europe (it was implied that these associations would, naturally, be under the control of Britain) was aimed against the Soviet Union and the revolutionary movement. This was the truth, but not the whole truth. The British Government hoped that, buttressed by these associations, it would have less difficulty in the dialogue with its more powerful and increasingly high-handed American partner. Churchill naturally left this aspect out of his talks with the Americans.

Churchill imagined that the indefinite preservation and expansion of the Anglo-American bloc that had taken shape during the war would neutralise US objections to the setting up in Europe of British-led alliances. In May 1943, during one of his frequent visits to the USA, Churchill invited to the British Embassy a group of prominent American statesmen (but not Roosevelt), with whom he talked over his idea of a postwar Anglo-American alliance. He said he would like to

see "the United States and the British Commonwealth work together in fraternal association". He was, moreover, ready to make far-reaching changes. He took the view that the citizens of Great Britain and the USA could, without forfeiting their present citizenship, travel freely between the two countries, take up residence and conduct their business without restriction in both Britain and the USA. He proposed the introduction of a common passport and the devising of some form of joint citizenship which would give American and British nationals the right to vote after a qualifying period of residence and to work in each other's government bodies, subject to existing legislation. Furthermore, Churchill suggested that the Anglo-American Combined Staff should be retained after the war, that there should be regular talks between the two countries' staffs and that steps should be taken to ensure cohesion in foreign policy.

In order to make the idea of an Anglo-American alliance attractive to the USA, Churchill declared that in this way America would be able to make use of the bases in the British Empire that she needed. He favoured expanding the joint use of US and British military bases. After Roosevelt's death, Churchill sounded out the new American President, Harry Truman, on the idea at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. He said that "Britain was a smaller Power than the United States, but she had much to give".

The Americans were well aware of what Churchill was leading up to. Henry Wallace, the US Vice-President, seemed anxious that other countries might think that Britain and the United States were trying to "boss the world". Churchill did not deny the possibility. He simply declared that "they ought not to put off necessary and rightful action by such suggestions". Truman told Churchill that he realised that what they were really talking about was "a continuation of the existing wartime system of reciprocal facilities between Britain and the United States about bases and fuelling points".

As Churchill saw matters, the alliance with America would help Britain to add many years to the lifetime of her rule over the gigantic colonial empire. Throughout the war, Churchill had opposed any measures that might eventually confer even minimal rights on the empire's numerous peoples. He clearly intended that they should remain the victims of colonial oppression for years to come. When he

and Roosevelt were drawing up the Atlantic Charter, which proclaimed the right of all peoples to freely select their own way of running their affairs, Churchill officially declared that the Charter was not applicable to the British Empire.

Here he diverged from the American Government, which took the view that the principles of the Atlantic Charter were universally applicable. What the US Government had in mind here was not, of course, freedom for the colonial peoples, but the replacement of British colonialism by American neo-colonialism. Churchill frequently declared that he would not tolerate any change in the administration of the British Empire. This feeling prompted his famous statement: "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

Churchill's ultra-colonialist policy impeded the mobilisation of the British Empire's war resources. It had particularly negative effects on the situation in India. In August 1942 a group of Indian national liberation leaders were imprisoned by decision of the British Government. Such leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were now behind bars. Naturally, these acts by the Churchill Government gave rise to grave doubts that Churchill was telling the truth when he claimed that he and his Government were fighting the war for the sake of freedom and democracy.

It was Soviet efforts that transformed the problem of the colonies during the war years from an internal problem, concerning only the various colonialist states, into an international issue that was considered by all members of the anti-Hitler coalition. At the San Francisco Conference, which founded the United Nations Organisation and adopted its Charter, the Soviet Union declared that the peoples living in colonies and dependencies should have a recognised right to freedom. The idea was opposed by the combined forces of Britain, the USA, France and a number of other countries which possessed colonies. The final outcome of the conference was that the colonialists failed to prevent the inclusion in the UN Charter of articles that went some way towards furthering the interests of the national liberation struggle.

Churchill's posture shows not only that he was an extreme imperialist and colonialist, but also that he did not sense the spirit of the times and did not realise that the colonial age was over. He failed to see that the British Empire was bound to disintegrate in the very near future.

As far as domestic policy was concerned, Churchill had no major worries during the war. This was really a stroke of luck for him. In alliance with the USSR, Britain was fighting a just anti-fascist war. Consequently, working people in Britain unanimously supported the Government and the measures it took to achieve victory. The British working class was far more prepared to bear the hardships of wartime than it had been during the First World War. The country's class struggle had not disappeared, of course, but it was less acute than it had been in 1914-18.

The Conservatives concluded a political truce with the Liberals and the Labour Party, and this meant that they would not fight for any Parliamentary seats that became vacant for any reason; these seats would belong to the party that had held them earlier. Whenever working-class organisations raised the question of repealing the anti-trade union legislation that Parliament had passed in 1927 in retaliation against the working class for the General Strike of 1926, Churchill refused to consider this and similar matters on the grounds that such a move might disturb national unity and could impair the country's war effort. This was just an excuse, of course, but the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions accepted it. Churchill resorted to the same excuse whenever anyone started talking about nationalising certain industries or the railways once the war was over. In such matters he acted as a faithful guardian of the interests of the British monopolies.

Churchill had vivid recollections of the difficulties experienced by the British Government between 1914 and 1918 over the vast upsurge in the working movement throughout the country. He warned his Government colleagues to bear in mind that Britain was "a modern community at war, and not Hottentots or Esquimaux". This comment (so Churchillian in its treatment of other nations) sounded a warning to the bourgeoisie against going too far in its headlong drive to extract profits from the war, so as not to intensify the class struggle. But the British bourgeoisie remembered the lessons of history.

The Churchill Government implemented a series of measures designed to slow down the rising price of food and other essentials. The measures did not restore real earnings to their former level, and purchasing power fell very sharply. But they did do something to calm the political atmosphere at home.

During the early war years, the Churchill Government publicised its readiness to work out a system of reforms that would improve the social conditions of ordinary people in Britain, the idea being that the changes would be made after the war. A special committee was set up under the direction of the Labour Party's Arthur Greenwood. As victory became more and more imminent, the Government made fewer references to the plans for postwar reform.

When the Liberal reformer William Beveridge presented his report on social security reform (which the Government had commissioned), Churchill and his colleagues gave his recommendations a cool reception. The insurance companies naturally opposed the Beveridge Report. The Churchill Government immediately surrendered to them and made an attempt to defend the recommendations. Greenwood, who was responsible for drawing up the programme of social reforms, was removed from the War Cabinet. This was too much for the Labour Party, and its Parliamentary section officially declared its "dissatisfaction with the now declared policy of His Majesty's Government towards the Beveridge Report" and urged that the policy be reconsidered "with a view to the early implementation of that plan". It was a symptom of the Labour Party's growing dissatisfaction with the way the coalition government was working.

There were other, similar symptoms too. Whenever the need for a by-election arose, the Labour and Liberal Parties honoured the political truce and did not field any candidates against the Conservatives. But this did not stop many independent candidates from putting in an appearance, and they began to win Parliamentary seats from the Conservatives. The Conservatives appealed to the independents not to oppose the Prime Minister—the national wartime leader—but these appeals fell on deaf ears.

Churchill was increasingly concentrating power in his own hands. The part played by the Cabinet, let alone Parliament, in running the country was declining. This gave rise to resentment. The press began to wonder whether Churchill was not himself becoming a dictator. He would reshuffle the War Cabinet as he thought fit, sometimes including, at other times excluding, Stafford Cripps, who was known for his left-wing views, and including in his stead Herbert Morrison, a right-wing Labour man. As Hughes puts it, "by the end of 1942, Churchill had actually become the

virtual dictator of Britain".

The Conservative press continued to publicise Churchill as the great national leader. This offended people of left-wing views. The Labour MP Aneurin Bevan said in Glasgow: "We see the personality of Winston Churchill paraded on the radio, in the Press, built up to gigantic dimensions until everybody around him looks like Lilliputians. When a man is in a very big position the bigness of his position comes to be described as the bigness of the man. Because water comes through a tap it doesn't follow it comes from it and many of the merits of the Prime Minister belong to the office and not to the man.... Do not be deceived."

H.G. Wells was even more critical of Churchill. In an article entitled "Churchill Must Go", published in the *Tribune* in December 1944, he wrote: "Winston Churchill, the present would-be British Führer, is a person with a range of ideas limited to the adventures and opportunities of British political life. He has never given evidence of thinking extensively or of any scientific or literary capacity. Now he seems to have lost his head completely.

"When the British people were blistered with humiliation by the currish policy of the old Conservative gang in power, the pugnacity of Winston brought him to the fore. The country liked fighting and he delighted in fighting. For want of a better reason he became the symbol of our national will for conflict, a role he has now outlived. His ideology, picked up in the garrison life of India, on the reefs of South Africa ... and the conversation of wealthy Conservative households, is a pitiful jumble of incoherent nonsense. A Boy Scout is better equipped. He has served his purpose and it is high time he retired upon his laurels before we forget the debt we owe him."

This rather harsh appraisal of Churchill does probably exaggerate his shortcomings, but it is evidence of the critical attitude towards Churchill that was steadily growing in Britain. At a certain moment in the final stage of the war, the growth of his popularity slowed down, and the process then slid into reverse. This decline in his appeal was certainly uppermost during the last months of the war. Churchill and the other Conservative leaders ignored what was happening, and were soon to be jolted out of their complacency at the general election of 1945.

Towards the end of the war, the Churchill Government

kept resolutely silent about the postwar future of Britain. On the other hand, the country's left-wing forces realised what these tactics really meant, and called increasingly for a change in the country's economic and social conditions once the war was over. At the end of 1944 the Communist Party published a programme called *How to Win the Peace* and appealed to all Britain's democratic forces to close ranks and bring Conservative rule to an end. The Communist Party Congress of October 1944 demanded a planned economic and social reconstruction of Britain based on the nationalisation of land, the coal and power industry, transport, the steel industry and the banks. The party proposed that the Labour, Liberal and Cooperative parties should form a progressive bloc at the forthcoming Parliamentary elections so as to rout the Tories and then replace the Conservative Government by a progressive one.

The fall in the prestige and authority of Churchill at the end of the war happened mainly because he did not understand the spirit of the times and attempted to resist irreversible processes in historical development. To a significant extent, the Second World War was a manifestation of the class struggle. The war that the socialist Soviet Union fought against fascist Germany and her allies had a class aspect. This factor would inevitably stimulate the international revolutionary movement. The victory of a socialist state over fascism, the extreme form of imperialist reaction, helped the revolutionary situation in European countries to mature. The same effect was also produced by the fact that the Communist Parties of Europe were in the front line of the struggle against fascism. Churchill realised that in these circumstances the war would end with a fresh revolutionary explosion that might sweep away the bourgeois system in a number of states. The nightmare of socialist revolution tortured him throughout the war. Many of the Churchill Government's acts were prompted by a fear of revolution.

As the countries of Western Europe had succumbed one after the other to Germany, governments-in-exile came to be concentrated in London. The British Government offered them protection for two reasons: to make use of all that they were capable of doing in the military struggle against Germany, and also to preserve them as seeds of the power which had to be replanted in their respective countries once they were freed from the Germans. They were all more or

less reactionary governments, and their return to their own countries would mean that power there would be handed over to reactionaries rather than to the left-wing forces which were consolidating in the fight against fascism.

The governments-in-exile were used by the British Government in order to prepare various interstate associations in Europe directed against the Soviet Union. They were also used by the British to strengthen and expand the position of the right-wing elements in the Resistance movement on the continent.

The British Government had an objective interest in seeing that the resistance to the German occupation became as widespread as possible. This was required by military considerations. Yet ministers realised that, as the scale of the struggle in the German-occupied countries increased, so the political balance of power there would swing in favour of the Communists and other left-wing forces. Accordingly, the British Government constantly fluctuated between the wish to use the Resistance for its own purposes and the desire to retard its development so as to contain the growth of the revolutionary tendencies in Europe. Britain made wise use of the device of supplying arms and equipment to members of the Resistance so as to support its right wing. Colonel F. W. Deakin, who dealt with these matters during the war and who subsequently became a historian, once said: "Weapons furnished by SOE must inevitably affect the balance of political forces within any given Resistance movement."

Churchill defended his own plan for striking at the enemy from the south, through the Balkans, with as much perseverance as he resisted the idea of attacking Germany through Western Europe. It is claimed that his idea was to strike at the enemy's weakest point. It is also said that he wished to exact a revenge of sorts for his Dardanelles failure in 1915. However, if these considerations played any part at all in Churchill's strategic thinking, it was only a minor part.

Political considerations were uppermost in his strategy. He was trying to get British and American troops landed in the Balkans so that they could then sweep northwards in force, occupy South-Eastern and Central Europe and so block the Red Army's westward advance. The landing of Anglo-American troops in the area would guarantee the restoration of reactionary regimes in these countries and

would also strengthen British influence. Churchill wrote a minute to the Foreign Office saying: "The issue is, Are we going to acquiesce in the Communisation of the Balkans and perhaps of Italy...?" He made it clear that, in his view, communist penetration should be resisted.

Churchill brought strong pressure to bear on the American General Eisenhower, who was in overall command of the American and British forces in Europe, so that the Americans might agree to the Balkan strategy. In his memoirs Eisenhower writes that Churchill "may have thought a postwar situation which would see the Western Allies posted in great strength in the Balkans would be more effective in producing a stable post-hostilities world than if the Russian armies should be the ones to occupy that region". Churchill intended that, at a suitable moment, the Anglo-American armies in Italy should advance into Central Europe through the Ljubljana Pass. Again he was impelled by the same anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary motive. Oliver Lyttelton (Lord Chandos) writes in his memoirs: "Time and again he drew attention to the advantages to be gained if the Western Allies rather than the Russians were the liberators and the occupying armies of some of the capitals, Budapest, Prague, Vienna, Warsaw, which are part of the very foundation of Europe."

The Soviet Union was not alone in opposing Churchill's Balkan strategy. The Americans saw clearly that the strategy was anti-American as well as anti-Soviet. President Roosevelt realised that Churchill's plans were designed to establish British domination of South-Eastern Europe, and he thought that the Americans should not drag their British rivals' chestnuts out of the fire for them.

The invasion of Western Europe by the Anglo-American forces in June 1944 brought about the gradual liberation of a number of countries from the fascist occupation. The liberated nations had no wish for a return to the old order and sought to build a new way of life along democratic lines. The most militant elements were concentrated in the Resistance movement, and so the British Government, striving at all costs to retain the bourgeois order in Europe, used its armed forces to disarm the Resistance fighters. This could not be done without a propaganda smoke-screen, so that, when the Belgian Resistance movement, for example, was being disarmed by British military units, Churchill tried

cynically to deceive public opinion. He claimed that the Belgian Resistance had been preparing a rising against the newly returned Government. A *News Chronicle* correspondent made careful inquiries in Belgium and then wrote in the paper that he "had been unable to find any trace of the intended *pütsch* which Mr. Churchill had alleged as the ground of British interference in Belgium".

In Greece, where the Resistance was considerably stronger, Churchill started an open war against the people in his efforts to foist upon them a reactionary king and government. At the end of December 1944, up to 60,000 British soldiers were sent into Greece. Churchill ordered General Scobie, who was in command of these forces, "to act as if you were in a conquest city where a local rebellion is in progress". British troops fired on a peaceful Greek demonstration, thereby initiating a lengthy and sanguinary war against the Greek people. Churchill's soldiers had to take Athens by storm. The blame for the intervention in Greece rests wholly upon Churchill. The Churchill Government's actions in Greece profoundly shocked British and world opinion.

The future of Poland was of particular concern to Churchill. The Polish Government in London was reactionary and more hostile to the Soviet Union than any other government-in-exile. The Poles in London regarded the Soviet Union as being a greater enemy than Nazi Germany. This was hardly surprising, since they represented the most reactionary elements of the Polish landowners and the bourgeoisie. The Polish Government-in-exile was concerned not so much with fighting the war against Germany as with wondering how, once the war had ended, it could recapture Western Byelorussia and the Western Ukraine. Bourgeois Poland had previously detached these territories from Soviet Russia, taking advantage of her temporary weakness and drawing on the support of imperialist Powers. In 1939 the peoples in these areas reunited with their kin in Soviet Byelorussia and the Soviet Ukraine. The Churchill Government supported the territorial claims of the Polish émigrés. Churchill needed a Poland that was more than just strong. He writes in his memoirs that during the inter-war years "Poland had been a spearpoint of anti-Bolshevism". That was the kind of Poland he wished to resurrect.

By the beginning of 1943 the situation on the various war

fronts was such that Churchill realised the absolute futility of any attempts to detach Western Byelorussia and the Western Ukraine from the USSR. This compelled him to agree to the siting of the Soviet-Polish border along the "Curzon Line", which had been proposed by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, as a just boundary between Soviet Russia and Poland during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. At the Teheran Conference at the end of 1943, Churchill proposed the adoption of the following decision on the Polish question: "It was agreed in principle that the hearth of the Polish state and people must be situated between the so-called Curzon Line and the line of the Oder River, including Eastern Prussia and the Oppeln Province as part of Poland." Stalin and Roosevelt accepted the proposal. However, the Polish government-in-exile only had to make its objections known for Churchill to repudiate the word he had given at Teheran.

At the end of the war, Churchill stepped up his activities over the Polish question, trying to impose a reactionary system and the anti-Soviet government-in-exile on the Polish people. The British Prime Minister had so much lost touch with reality that he proposed that the Soviet Government should put the territories in the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, which were then being liberated by the Red Army, under United Nations control. Stalin wrote to Churchill on the subject: "As regards the desire to place certain Soviet territories under foreign control, we cannot agree to discuss such encroachments, for, as we see it, the mere posing of the question is an affront to the Soviet Union." Churchill was liberal in his use of threats against the Soviet Government as he sought its agreement to the restoration of a hostile and reactionary Poland on the other side of the Soviet frontier. Although he had complete US Government backing in the matter, his efforts were doomed to failure. The Polish patriots who had been operating in Poland herself and who had conducted an all-out struggle against the German occupation consolidated their forces and set up their own state bodies. The Soviet Union gave the democratic forces of the Polish people all possible assistance and support. At the same time, the Soviet Government showed its willingness to meet the British Government half-way and to agree that the future Government of Poland should be broadly based so as to include both democratic

leaders from Poland herself and Poles from abroad.

Churchill took advantage of this show of good will by the Soviet Government in order to try to impose on the new Poland a government that was, by and large, reactionary and to bar from it all progressive leaders, and especially Communists. This stand taken by Churchill ran counter not only to the interests of the Polish people, but also to the decisions that Churchill himself had approved at the Yalta Conference in February 1945.

Churchill's action over the Polish question was a hopeless struggle against the Polish people, who were thoroughly determined to prevent any return to the past and to rebuild their way of life in accordance with democratic, socialist principles. But it was also a struggle against the Soviet Union, which had no intention of allowing the restoration around its borders of the notorious *cordon sanitaire* that was established after the First World War through the efforts of Britain, France and the USA for counter-revolutionary, anti-Soviet purposes.

As it became clearer that Poland would develop democratically, so Churchill was increasingly hostile towards the Polish people, who had dared to determine their own way of life without reference to the plans issuing from London. As a result, the question of Poland's western border gave rise to great controversy at the Potsdam Conference between the heads of state of the USSR, Britain and the USA. The Soviet Union favoured the restitution to the Polish people of original Polish land that had been seized by the Germans. But Churchill argued for a western border that would still leave some of this land in German hands.

The American historian Joseph Morray has the following to say on the subject: "The Potsdam Conference of the three heads of Government had heard President Bierut of Poland argue for fixing the western frontier of Poland along the Oder and Western Neisse rivers....

"Churchill opposed Bierut's claim.... It might be thought a paradox that Churchill, who had urged Britain to go to war against Germany on behalf of Poland and who had declared himself at Yalta as being in favour of 'substantial accessions' of German territory to Poland, was now arguing as a protector of the Germans against Polish claims. Was it not really the character of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity that made these inroads on German territory

'enormous and wrongful' to him? " Here Morray has gone to the heart of Churchill's position. However, Churchill was not allowed to have his way, and Poland was given justified frontiers at the insistence of the Soviet Union.

Churchill had no liking for the revolutionary situation that had sprung up in Europe. He realised that the Soviet Union was a powerful revolutionising force, and so his animosity towards the USSR increased and occasionally caused him to take leave of his senses. The Yalta Conference of February 1945 approved a decision which spoke of the common determination of the USSR, Britain and the USA "to maintain and strengthen in the peace to come that unity of purpose and of action which has made victory possible and certain for the United Nations in this war.... Only with continuing and growing co-operation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace-loving nations can the highest aspiration of humanity be realised—a secure and lasting peace." Churchill signed this decision reluctantly. At the time, he was really thinking not of mutual understanding between the three countries, but of using force in order to limit the influence of the Soviet Union on world politics and to force it to agree to the Western Powers' exporting counter-revolution to the European countries that were being liberated by the Red Army.

In his war memoirs Churchill writes that his policy and strategy in March 1945 were as follows:

"*First*, that Soviet Russia had become a mortal danger to the free world.

"*Secondly*, that a new front must be immediately created against her onward sweep.

"*Thirdly*, that this front in Europe should be as far east as possible.

"*Fourthly*, that Berlin was the prime and true objective of the Anglo-American armies.

"*Fifthly*, that the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the entry into Prague of American troops was of high consequence.

"*Sixthly*, that Vienna, and indeed Austria, must be regulated by the Western Powers, at least upon an equality with the Russian Soviets. "

"*Seventhly*, that Marshal Tito's aggressive pretensions against Italy must be curbed.

"*Finally, and above all*, that a settlement must be reached

on all major issues between the West and the East in Europe *before the armies of democracy melted.*"

Churchill's policy and strategy here are a far cry from what he had said and signed a few weeks before at Yalta. He now saw Russia as a deadly threat and felt that a new front needed to be immediately formed against her. Of course, Churchill's official position remained unchanged, since he had not yet repudiated the Yalta decisions, but in actual fact, as he shows in his memoirs, his policy was diametrically opposed to those decisions.

Despite the Yalta agreements, Churchill attempted to secure General Eisenhower's consent to the Allied troops' launching a powerful thrust towards Berlin, so that they would occupy the German capital before the Red Army could. On 5 April 1945, Churchill wrote to Roosevelt: "All this makes it the more important that we should join hands with the Russian armies as far to the east as possible, and, if circumstances allow, enter Berlin." In view of the military situation, however, Eisenhower was in no position to put this plan into effect.

On various occasions Churchill wrote a great deal about how closely he co-operated with President Roosevelt, and how he respected and even liked him. These claims are rather far removed from the truth of the matter. Roosevelt knew and understood Churchill as few others did. He was not taken in by polite formalities: Churchill often referred to himself as Roosevelt's "first lieutenant" and invariably addressed Roosevelt as "Mr. President". Roosevelt responded with a more homely "Winston". The British Prime Minister's stubbornness tired Roosevelt out. Eye-witnesses say that towards the end of the war the President would usually let Churchill have his say and would then briefly announce his verdict.

Nevertheless, Roosevelt grew used to Churchill and valued him. Only when the President died was a wooden statuette of Churchill with an enormous cigar in his mouth cleared away from his desk in the White House study.

When Franklin Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945 and Harry Truman became President, Churchill considered that he now had a better chance of demolishing the anti-Hitler coalition at the final stage of the war.

Subsequently Churchill revealed to the world that "even before the war had ended and while the Germans were surrendering by hundreds of thousands and our streets were

crowded with cheering people, I telegraphed to Lord Montgomery [who commanded the British forces in Western Europe—*V.I.* directing him to be careful in collecting the German arms, to stack them so that they could easily be issued again to the German soldiers whom we should have to work with if the Soviet advance continued". A quarter of a century later, the West German bourgeois-liberal writer Sebastian Haffner commented: "Hitler's hope of a clash between East and West was not entirely unfounded: in the spring and early summer of 1945 there really was the danger (or chance, depending on your point of view) that war might break out immediately between the victors. At least one of the leading Allied statesmen, Churchill, was, according to reliable sources, ready for this and even looked forward to it." Churchill's own words, quoted above, amount to a frank confession of the shameful fact that, at the final stage of the war, he was prepared to enter into an alliance with the surviving Nazis and to turn his guns round against his Ally, the USSR. This is, perhaps, the biggest piece of betrayal that Churchill ever thought of. To some extent, it can only be compared with the treason committed by his famous ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough. Churchill tried to persuade the Americans to join him in concluding a separate peace (without the USSR) with Germany, but the US Government decided against such a move.

Churchill considered that the United States was responsible for the failure of his plan to use force against the Soviet Union and to form a front against it in the spring of 1945. Yet the real point is that the United States, just like Britain, was, in effect, quite powerless to put Churchill's highly irresponsible plan into effect, since there were simply not the resources with which to do it. What was more, the people would not have allowed the governments of Britain and the USA to act against the Soviet Union in the way Churchill had planned.

The dossier which the American Joint Chiefs of Staff compiled for the US delegation to the Potsdam Conference contained a document noting "the recent phenomenal development of the heretofore latent Russian military and economic strength" and going on to say that "in a conflict between these two powers [Britain and the USSR] the disparity in the military strengths that they could dispose upon that continent would, under present conditions, be far

too great to be overcome by our intervention on the side of Britain. Having due regard to the military factors involved—resources, manpower. geography and particularly our ability to project our strength across the ocean and exert it decisively upon the continent—we might be able to successfully defend Britain, but we could not, under existing conditions, defeat Russia. In other words, we would find ourselves engaged in a war which we could not win."

The public's feeling for the Soviet Union was one of the crucial factors that prevented Churchill from switching his front against the USSR. An official British historian of the Second World War, Llewellyn Woodward, writes: "Public opinion indeed outside the areas directly under Russian control would not have understood, and to a large extent would have been outraged, by the threat of force against an ally which had in fact taken for so long the weight of the German attack on land and whose resistance had made possible the invasion of German-controlled Europe from the west." Churchill himself had to admit that this was so: "In their fight against Hitler, the Russian peoples had built up an immense good will in the West, not least of all in the United States."

Needless to say, Churchill drew up all these profoundly anti-Soviet plans in the greatest secrecy. Officially, he acted as a conscientious and reliable ally towards the Soviet Government. Outwardly, Anglo-Soviet relations seemed to be fine, and there was an impression that they were becoming even more cordial.

While Churchill was formulating his new strategy and policy towards the USSR in the spring of 1945, his wife, Clementine, visited the Soviet Union as a guest of the Soviet Government. She was invited to the USSR in appreciation of her work as chairman of the Aid to Russia Fund. The Soviet Government commended the wish of the British public to help the peoples of the USSR and praised the effort that Clementine Churchill had put into the task. She was given a warm reception in the USSR and was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner of Labour.

On 9 May 1945, on the occasion of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender, Clementine Churchill broadcast over Radio Moscow the following greeting from her husband to the Soviet people and the Red Army: "From the British nation I send you heartfelt greetings on the splendid victories

you have won in driving the invader from your soil and laying the Nazi tyrant low. It is my firm belief that on the friendship and understanding between the British and Russian peoples depends the future of mankind. Here in our island home, we are thinking today very often about you all, and we send you from the bottom of our hearts our wishes for your happiness and well-being, and that after all the sacrifices and sufferings of the dark valley through which we have marched together, we may also in loyal comradeship and sympathy walk in the sunshine of victorious peace. I have asked my wife to speak these few words of friendship and admiration to you all."

But these were just words. Churchill's deeds told a different story. After the surrender of Germany, Churchill peddled the idea that the American troops who had penetrated somewhat farther eastwards than had been envisaged by the Governments of the USSR, the USA and Britain when they decided on the boundaries of their occupation zones in Germany, should not be withdrawn until important concessions had been wrung from the Soviet Union under threat of force. Churchill considered it essential to hold a high-level meeting and to secure the Soviet Government's acceptance of British and American demands relating to Poland and a number of other countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe—amounting to suppression of the revolution that had been developing in these countries and retention of the capitalist system. This would have been a flagrant violation of the agreements that had only recently been concluded by the three Great Powers. But Churchill was unperturbed. His view was: "It would indeed be a disaster if we kept all our agreements in strict good faith."

The execution of Churchill's plan could lead to war between Britain, the USA and the USSR. Churchill was perfectly well aware of this. Moreover, he instructed his military advisers to study the possibilities and prospects of such a war. Britain's Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke noted in his diary on 24 May 1945: "This evening I went carefully through the Planners' report on the possibility of taking on Russia should trouble arise in our future discussions with her. We were instructed to carry out this investigation."

The US President's special representative, Josef Davies, who met Churchill at this time, reported to the President that "it had been his [Churchill's] purpose ... to employ the

presence of American forces and their position in advance of their lines, as trading material to induce concessions from the Soviets.... He was willing to run the great risk which such a gamble entails."

The balance of power remained the same, and Churchill was powerless to carry out his threat. The view of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff that it would be impossible to win a war against the USSR was also shared by British military leaders. After reading the report on "the possibility of taking on Russia", Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke wrote in his diary: "The idea is, of course, fantastic and the chances of success quite impossible. There is no doubt that from now onwards Russia is all-powerful in Europe."

One can only be amazed by the recklessness and irresponsibility of the plans that Churchill was making in the spring of 1945. Lord Moran states: "It was exhaustion of mind and body that accounts for much that is otherwise inexplicable in the last year of the war." It is hard to agree with the venerable physician. He is clearly exaggerating the degree of Churchill's fatigue and is on rather shaky ground in trying to explain politics through physiology. The explanation of Churchill's recklessness should be sought in his hostility towards socialism and the revolutionary movement which had frequently prompted him to undertake desperate gambles before (during the intervention in Russia) and was to do so later (Fulton).

At the end of May 1945, Davies came to see Churchill on behalf of Truman in order to prepare the Potsdam Conference of the three heads of state. Wishing to persuade the Americans of the correctness of the policy he proposed, Churchill spoke frankly to Davies. Davies reported to his chief that Churchill was so anti-Soviet that "I told him frankly that I had been shocked beyond words to find so violent and bitter an attitude, and to find what appeared to me so violent a change in his attitude towards the Soviets.... It staggered me with the fear that there could be no peace. I had heard of such an attitude in Britain, but I had discounted these reports....

"I said that frankly, as I had listened to him inveigh so violently against the threat of Soviet domination and the spread of Communism in Europe.... I had wondered whether he, the Prime Minister, was now willing to declare to the world that he and Britain had made a mistake in not

supporting Hitler, for as I understood him, he was now expressing the doctrine which Hitler and Goebbels had been proclaiming and reiterating for the past four years in an effort to break up allied unity and 'divide and conquer'. Exactly the same conditions which he described and the same deductions were drawn from them as he now appeared to assert." It need hardly be said that Churchill did not care for Davies' appraisal of his position.

Such, at any rate, were Churchill's feelings as he set off for the three-power conference that was held at Potsdam from 17 July to 2 August 1945.

The conference decisions amounted to a compromise between the three Powers' different positions. The decisions on the German question were the most important. It was agreed that Germany should be regarded as a single political and economic unit despite her division into occupation zones. Germany was to be completely disarmed and demilitarised, Nazi organisations were to be abolished, and the country was to develop along democratic lines.

British policy towards the future of Germany had by then undergone a substantial change. During the war, Germany had shown herself to be a very dangerous enemy. As a result, plans had appeared in both Britain and the United States for weakening Germany as much as possible once victory had been attained. It was intended to strip Germany of her military-industrial potential by turning her into a largely agrarian country. The same objective was pursued by the plans that the British and the Americans had often proposed and discussed for splitting Germany into a number of separate states. However, as it became more apparent that the Soviet Union would emerge from the war strong and victorious, British politicians began to doubt the wisdom of these plans. It was dawning on the British Government that it would be better to have a reasonably strong Germany after the war, so that she could always be used against the Soviet Union.

On 27 July 1944, Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke noted in his diary: "Back to War Office to have an hour with Secretary of State discussing postwar policy in Europe. Should Germany be dismembered or gradually converted to an ally to meet the Russian threat of twenty years hence? I suggested the latter and feel certain that we must from now onwards regard Germany in a very different light. Germany is

no longer the dominating power in Europe—Russia is. Therefore, foster Germany, gradually build her up and bring her into a Federation of Western Europe. Unfortunately this must all be done under the cloak of a holy alliance between England, Russia and America." The foundations were thus being laid for the British policy towards Germany that was later pursued during the years that followed the Second World War.

Guided by these considerations and supported by Truman, Churchill did everything possible at the Potsdam Conference to limit Soviet rights to fair reparations from Germany. The USSR's legitimate demands for this were not met.

The conference decided to set up a Council of Foreign Ministers to prepare, for the forthcoming peace conference, draft peace treaties with Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, as well as the terms of a peace settlement for Germany. This was an important decision, envisaging as it did further co-operation between the USSR, Britain and the USA in resolving a number of weighty international issues. It showed that, no matter how much Churchill may have wished to dissolve the anti-Hitler coalition, this could not be done immediately.

Although they were compromise decisions, the resolutions of the Potsdam Conference marked an important stage in the co-operation between the three leading Powers in the anti-Hitler coalition. If the decisions had been implemented in all the German occupation zones, and not just in the Soviet zone, the cause of international security and progress would have gained even more from them. The success of Potsdam results from the fact that the Soviet Union used its influence in the interests of a democratic peace settlement.

Britain and the USA also had to take account of Soviet proposals because the British and American peoples were demanding that the co-operation and alliance with the USSR should continue into the postwar period. In 1972, drawing on the Beaverbrook archives, A.J.P. Taylor published a biography of that prominent politician and great friend of Churchill's. The book mentions a letter from Beaverbrook, dated 16 June 1945, in which he writes: "The great majority of Englishmen realise, as you and I do, the need for Russian friendship. They would tolerate no Government that pursued an opposite course."

Churchill and Truman were also prompted to compromise at Potsdam by the American Government's firm determination to secure Soviet support for the conclusion of the war in the Far East. Churchill had no particular axe to grind here, since the brunt of the Far Eastern war was being borne by the USA, but he could not ignore the American position.

Churchill was overjoyed when, in the course of the Potsdam Conference, the American delegation received a report that the experimental detonation of an atomic bomb had been successful. He knew that research in this field would give America—and, he calculated, Britain too—a new weapon of immense destructive power. That weapon now existed.

Significantly, Churchill's first thought after reading the report which Truman had handed him was that the atomic bomb should be used against the Soviet Union, and that now Britain and the USA could force the USSR to capitulate by intimidating it with the new weapon. To Sir Alan Brooke he declared: "We now had something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians.... Now we had a new value which redressed our position." Churchill said that the Soviet Union could now be told: "If you insist on doing this or that, well.... And then where are the Russians! " His meaning was that after the "well..." atomic bombs would be dropped on the Soviet Union, and "the Russians" would be wiped out. Sir Alan Brooke comments that Churchill "was already seeing himself capable of eliminating all the Russian centres of industry and population."

One can understand these views of Churchill's if one bears in mind that, as he himself declares, by the spring of 1945 "the Soviet menace, to my eyes, had already replaced the Nazi foe". In the light of all these admissions by Churchill and other British leaders, it is hardly surprising that the British Establishment, acting in collusion with its American counterpart, soon demolished the co-operation that had developed between the leading members of the anti-Hitler coalition.

Churchill called the last volume of his war memoirs *Triumph and Tragedy*. Since he is accustomed to view history from his own personal standpoint, this means that the end of the war against Germany was, for him, both a triumph and a tragedy.

Britain had survived in the deadly struggle against Germany. At the beginning of the war it had seemed that defeat was inevitable and that, as the French generals put it, the Germans would soon wring Britain's neck. Seen against this background, Germany's unconditional surrender to Allies that included Britain was an undoubted triumph. The honour of leading the country during the years when this triumph was being achieved had fallen to Churchill. His merits bringing about victory over Germany are beyond question, even if they are not as great as he himself imagines. The years when Churchill headed the British Government and represented his country in the anti-Hitler coalition saw his greatest accomplishment as a statesman. It marked the zenith of his political career.

The delight which Churchill felt at the victory over Germany was clouded by the fact that, although Britain had been among the victors, that victory had not justified the hopes of the British Establishment. At the end of the war, and especially after it, first in Europe and then in Asia, a powerful wave of socialist revolution reared up, swept away capitalism in a number of countries and caused the emergence of a worldwide socialist system. Capitalism as a system had suffered a grave setback. Churchill and the British and American Governments were unable to eliminate the gains of this new stage of socialist revolution. Here they sustained a serious defeat, and this, for Churchill at any rate, transformed the triumph of the victory over Germany into a tragedy.

The war caused the balance of power in the capitalist world to swing radically against Britain. The gap between the economic and military capacity of the USA and Britain increased considerably. In many respects, Britain emerged from the war dependent on America. The author of one of the volumes of the British official history of the Second World War, R.W. Thompson, comments sorrowfully that "on 'D day' Britain ceased to be a major power in the world, no longer even to shape her own ends. The new Europe would not be hers, or of her making."

For Britain, the results of the war contrasted sharply with her war aims as formulated by Churchill in his talks with President Roosevelt during the Placentia Bay conference in 1941. At that time, both Anglo-Saxon leaders had hoped that the war would lead to the establishment of Anglo-American

domination of the world. But, as the American historian William Neumann points out, "World War II failed to achieve the hopes and aspirations voiced by Roosevelt and Churchill in August of 1941". This is undoubtedly true. For ultimately communism and not capitalism proved victorious over a large part of the world. These are the factors that turned the end of the war into a tragedy as far as Churchill was concerned.

He refused to accept the results of the Second World War and devoted the remaining years of his life to vain efforts to change them.

Chapter 11

Cold War Crusader

At the end of the war with Germany, Churchill was working on various plans for struggle against the Soviet Union and the developing socialist revolution in Europe. He seemed to have forgotten that the war was over only in Europe, and that there was still to be heavy fighting in Asia and the Pacific before victory could be won over Japan. The British and American experts at that time came to the conclusion that the war with Japan, even with the participation of the Soviet Union, would last a year and a half after the capitulation of Germany.

In the spring of 1945, Churchill was profoundly at variance in his plans with the mood of the British people. That year, all over Europe, Britain included, there was a marked swing to the left among the masses. The British wanted to continue their alliance and co-operation with the USSR and to rebuild their internal life on democratic foundations. Churchill was incapable of noticing or understanding this, and the result was a terrible blow to him.

By the time Germany capitulated, the British Parliament, elected in 1935, was approaching the end of its tenth year. Under wartime conditions, Parliament had served two terms of office, but it was clear that elections would have to be held before the end of the Second World War. In October 1944, Churchill announced that they would take place immediately after victory over Germany.

In reality, Churchill was not very eager to hold elections. A retention of the coalition with the Labour and Liberal Parties in the postwar period would have been to his advantage. On 18 May 1945, he proposed that they should continue co-operating until the end of the war with Japan and that elections should be held immediately if both parties preferred to leave the coalition.

The right-wing Labour leaders who had taken part in Churchill's Coalition Government during the war were not against continuing to co-operate with the Conservatives in the postwar period. They expressed themselves in favour of retaining the coalition, hoping to keep their ministerial portfolios and not expecting that the new elections to Parliament would result in a majority for Labour. However, the annual Labour Party Conference voted against retaining the coalition. The rank-and-file members of the Labour Party were eager for change and were aware that Churchill's Cabinet would not allow this. They wanted to put an independent Labour Government in power, believing that it would carry out a series of important reforms in the country's internal life.

In the opinion of the Labour leaders, the immediate elections which Churchill threatened in the event of the Labour and Liberal parties refusing a coalition were not to their advantage, for the Conservatives would undoubtedly try to use Churchill's personal authority as a war leader in order to gain a victory. The Labour Party, for its part, was inadequately prepared for elections. Time was needed to bring the whole complex party machinery into a state of battle preparedness. Attlee proposed retaining the coalition until October. Churchill guessed the Labour Party's intentions and refused.

On 23 May 1945, Churchill tendered resignation and the National Government, which had been in office from 1940 to 1945 under his leadership, ceased to exist. The War Cabinet also automatically became redundant.

Churchill formed a caretaker government which was to run the country until the General Election, scheduled for 5 July. Here Churchill committed a tactical blunder. The caretaker government was recruited exclusively from Conservatives of the most reactionary type. They had, in the past, been vigorous advocates of the Munich Agreement and were responsible for Britain's disastrous foreign policy in the

period between the two world wars. The composition of the new government was, as it were, a pointer to Churchill's programme for the postwar period. The average Britisher immediately realised that Churchill was not contemplating any reforms whatever and that under his leadership an attempt was being made to take Britain back to the positions of the dismal twenties and thirties. Churchill and the Conservatives indeed had such intentions in mind, but they were at variance with the mood of the people. The composition of the caretaker government was therefore a kind of challenge to the British people. Thus, at this stage, Churchill already seriously undermined his position at the coming polls. The British electorate were put on their guard and doubted whether Churchill was really the man to be entrusted with the leadership of the country in peacetime conditions. It should be borne in mind that many of them, knowing of Churchill's previous activities, had come to this conclusion even before he formed the caretaker government. During the election campaign, the British public were given additional proof that their suspicions about Churchill and the Conservatives were fully justified.

The Conservative's main political opponents at the elections were the Labour Party. Labour's refusal to take part in a coalition government led by Churchill and their attacks on the Conservatives at the elections angered Churchill and the other Conservative leaders. They lost all sense of reality and conducted the election campaign in such a way that they considerably weakened their own position. In the final analysis, however, the outcome of the elections was decided not so much by the tactical errors of the Conservative leaders as by the new deployment of class forces in the country after the war.

The outstanding role the Soviet Union played in the victory over Germany had resulted in an enormous growth of sympathy for the socialist cause. Britain was no exception. People were convinced that only a socialist system could have given the strength to ensure the defeat of fascism. The attraction of socialism in Britain was powerful. Churchill, however, attacking the Labour Party during the election campaign, accused it first and foremost of being a socialist party. Such an accusation could only have the opposite results to those he wanted. But he went considerably further, claiming that there was no substantial difference between

socialism and the recently defeated nazism.

Churchill launched personal attacks on leaders of the Labour Party who had only recently been memberes of his War Cabinet, had worked loyally with him over a number of years and had, in effect, put him in power in 1940 by agreeing to join a coalition government he formed.

When attacking the Labour Party in the early twenties, Churchill had compared them to the Bolsheviks and had accused them of all seven deadly sins. He would have liked to repeat this version of his charge now, but it would have signified a direct attack on the Soviet Union, which had ensured victory in the war and with which Churchill had co-operated within the framework of the anti-Hitler coalition. This co-operation was still effective to a considerable degree in the spring of 1945. He therefore confined himself to drawing absurd parallels between the Labour Party and the Nazis.

Churchill declared that the Socialist policy was "a dangerous challenge to liberty and to the credit of the nation", and that Labour victory at the elections would, in the final analysis, mean the establishment of the kind of system introduced in Germany by Hitler. "No Socialist Government," he said, "conducting the entire life and industry of the country, could afford to allow free, sharp or violently worded expressions of public discontent." He finally descended to sheer absurdity by saying that a victory for the Labour Party would be one for the Gestapo.

Everything seemed to suggest that Churchill and Beaverbrook intended to repeat the move the Conservatives had made during the 1924 and 1931 election campaigns, when they had alarmed the considerable petty-bourgeois section of the British electorate with the bogey of revolution and had pushed it in the direction of the Conservative Party. This time, Churchill tried to frighten these same elements of the electorate with totalitarianism. The Beaverbrook press affirmed: "After ripping the Gestapo out of the still-beating heart of Germany, will you stand for a Gestapo under another name at home? Were you shocked to learn from Mr. Churchill that State control leads to Fascism? "

Similar attacks on Labour, on socialism and, consequently, on the Soviet Union by implication, were Churchill's second tactical blunder in the 1945 election campaign. Many Conservatives realised this immediately. Virginia Cowles tells how she heard Churchill's radio broadcast on 5 June in the

house of newspaper magnate Lord Rothermere. She recalls that there was an awkward silence when Churchill had finished speaking. Then the host said: "If he continues like that, the election is as good as lost." *The Times* and several other newspapers tried to tone down Churchill's statements, but to no avail. Churchill had too much faith in his popularity, his authority and the logic of his own opinions to be convinced that he had taken the wrong line.

The entire Conservative propaganda machine was determinedly advertising the party's leader, portraying him as a great man with no equal anywhere else in the world. Churchill went on an election tour of Britain, and Conservative propaganda, in its efforts to attract the largest possible numbers of voters to his public appearances, lost all sense of proportion. Sometimes, when Churchill's party was approaching a town, it was preceded by a special Conservative loudspeaker van proclaiming: "Here comes Winnie. Watch the third car—the greatest man on earth, the greatest statesman in the world." The street hoardings were plastered with posters bearing photographs of Churchill and the legend: "The Man Who Won the War" or "The Man Who Must Finish the Job."

The British electorate was called on to vote for Churchill who had won the war; but this job had already been done. It was the future with which the British were concerned. They wanted to vote for the man who was going to win the peace and they were not certain that Churchill was the right man. And not solely because they knew that Churchill was not at all interested in problems of home policy and that in social and economic matters he was merely the mouthpiece of the monopolies. The British workers were worried because Churchill's attacks on socialism were also attacks on the USSR, and because in the spring of 1945 the Conservative press was conducting a camouflaged but very intensive hate campaign against the Soviet Union.

The Conservative organisers of the election campaign quickly realised that attacks on the USSR would inevitably alienate the voters. Consequently, Churchill and his party colleagues, when denouncing Labour as socialists, also determinedly tried to convince the public that it was the Conservatives who had been responsible for the alliance with the USSR in the Second World War. It was particularly stressed that Churchill, as they claimed, was Stalin's best friend.

In conducting their election campaign, the Conservatives

concentrated mainly on criticism of their political opponents. They did not, in fact, put forward a positive programme. As one of Churchill's biographers commented, they went to the elections with nothing but photographs of their leader, hoping to get into the new Parliament solely on the strength of his personal authority.

All his life, however, their leader had been very remote from the people, and the electorate knew this. In April 1945, Clementine Churchill told Lord Moran, her husband's personal doctor: "Winston has always seen things in blinkers.... His eyes are focussed on the point he is determined to attain. He knows nothing of the life of ordinary people. He's never been in a bus, and only once on the underground."

It must be admitted that the leadership of the Labour Party chose a wise line in conducting the 1945 election campaign. They put forward a programme for a number of important reforms in tune with the mood of the electorate. Labour promised to nationalise certain major branches of the British economy and to carry out the drastic reorganisation of the social security system. They gave assurances that they would do everything possible so that the military alliance between Britain, the USSR and the USA, which had been formed during the war, should continue in the postwar period. Attlee, the Labour Party leader, a calm and balanced man with no particular pretensions, behaved with restraint during the election campaign. The moderate tone of his speeches was in marked contrast to Churchill's unbridled pompous demagogy and made an impression favourable to the Labour Party.

Churchill did not have the slightest doubt about the verdict of the public. The many forecasters of the election results disagreed only over how large a majority the Conservatives would obtain in the new Parliament. Beaverbrook assured Churchill that his majority would be at least a hundred. Even Attlee was sure, like Churchill, that the Conservatives would win the majority in the new House of Commons.

Polling took place on 5 July, but the announcement of the results was postponed until 26 July, since it was necessary for the votes to come in from the Army, which had many units in remote parts of the world.

The Potsdam conference of the heads of the Soviet, British and American governments began work before the

election results became known in Britain. The work of the conference was suspended so that Churchill could go to Britain for the announcement of the results. As he left Potsdam, he declared that he had no doubt that he would be returning. Lord Moran left all his luggage in Berlin, expecting to return there a day later with his client. Churchill gave instructions that a small family dinner should be held on the day of the results in his London house to celebrate the Conservative victory.

It so happened, however, that neither the Conservatives nor Labour had correctly interpreted the mood of the British people in the spring of 1945. The Conservatives suffered a crushing defeat. Labour obtained 393 seats in the House of Commons, while the Conservatives and the affiliated groups only got 213.

This was a terrible and completely unexpected shock to Churchill. At the hour of his greatest triumph, when he had been appearing in a halo of glory as the leader of the British people whom he had led to victory and when it seemed that his prestige had never been higher, the electorate had turned him and his party down. Virginia Cowles, who was present at the ill-fated dinner on 26 July, testifies that Churchill was completely crushed by the news. He sat unmoving, incapable of uttering a word. His daughters were in tears.

Churchill never understood and never forgave the British people for what happened to him at the 1945 election. He expressed his annoyance on this subject many times. He was convinced that the British people had committed a gross error of judgment by removing him and the Conservative Party from power. His reproaches against the British people are scattered in abundance throughout the six volumes of his Second World War memoirs. He was particularly hurt that the general mass of the soldiers should have voted against the Conservatives, when, as he considered, he had shone during the war years as a great military leader. Sebastian Haffner was close to the truth when he wrote: "England needed Churchill to lead the war against Germany. However, despite all the admiration and all the gratitude for what he had done in the war against Germany, England did not want his services for the unleashing of a war against the Soviet Union."

This is how Anthony Eden describes the last session of the Churchill Government at 10 Downing Street: "July 27th: At noon W. held farewell Cabinet. It was a pretty grim affair.

After it was over I was on my way to the front door when W. called me back and we had half an hour alone. He was pretty wretched, poor old boy. Said he didn't feel any more reconciled this morning, on the contrary it hurt more, like a wound which becomes more painful after the first shock. He couldn't help feeling his treatment had been scurvy. 'Thirty years of my life have been passed in this room. I shall never sit in it again. You will, but I shall not.' "

Instead of returning to Potsdam, Churchill had to go to Buckingham Palace and tender his resignation to the King. The formation of the new government was entrusted to Labour leader Clement Attlee.

The Labour Government was recruited mainly from right-wing statesmen who had gained their experience from the Conservatives and had served in Churchill's Coalition Government during the war years. It is claimed that Churchill even took part in the formation of the new government.

Attlee appointed Ernest Bevin Foreign Minister. Attlee and Bevin had been with Churchill's delegation at the first part of the Potsdam Conference. Churchill had taken Attlee with him so that the Labour leadership would be informed of what happened at the conference and might, perhaps, support its decisions when they were subsequently discussed in Parliament.

It is said that when Attlee became Prime Minister, he invited Churchill to return with him to the Potsdam Conference with the rights he himself had when he had first left for Berlin. Churchill refused, and it is not difficult to understand him. He could not go back as a rank-and-file member of the delegation to the place were he had been the representative of Great Britain with full authority and one of the three leaders of the coalition which had ensured victory over Germany.

Chuchill now had to decide what to do next. Many people close to him thought that he should retire from active political life and spend his remaining years resting on the laurels which he had acquired in the war period. After all, he should not really concern himself with routine parliamentary questions in a rather modest position of Leader of the Opposition. In any case, Parliament would not have to solve the gigantic problems of conducting a war, but modest economic and social ones which were of no interest to Churchill. Even in the first postwar years, when he had been

head of the caretaker government, Churchill had felt unhappy because he was not dealing with military problems any more, but was merely handling ordinary peacetime matters. "I feel very lonely without a war," he told Lord Moran. Many of his friends advised him to retire from Parliament and political activity altogether and devote himself to writing his history of the Second World War.

There was much common sense in this advice. Had he followed it, Churchill would have retained the authority which he enjoyed at the end of the war at home and abroad. But it cannot be discounted that this "friendly advice" masked a desire to get rid of Churchill as the Conservative Party leader who, in the 1945 election campaign, had committed a series of gross blunders which had been one cause of the Party's defeat.

Churchill, however, was not the kind of man to listen to such advice, admit final defeat and leave active political life permanently. He knew perfectly well that if he refused the post of Leader of the Opposition and of the party, he could never be Prime Minister again. He therefore announced that he intended to tackle all the problems which came his way in the postwar period in Parliament and to continue as Leader of the Conservative Party.

Labour had a stable majority in the Commons, and this meant that their government was almost certain to remain in power for the full five-year term. It could not be ruled out, however, that the next General Election could also end in a triumph for the Labour Party. Churchill was now seventy-one, but he felt fit and hoped that the Conservatives would win the election and he would return to No.10 Downing Street. "They won't last for ever," he said of the Labour Government. "Pray God they don't do too much damage before we can get back at them. We shall return. We shall return, as sure as the sun rises tomorrow! "

In adopting this decision, Churchill made it his chief objective in Parliament to discredit the Labour Government as damagingly as possible and in this way to hasten the return of the Conservatives to power. It was a difficult task. The Attlee Government concerned itself mainly with economic policy and social problems. In this sphere, the Labour ministers were stronger than Churchill. They had better theoretical and practical training for tackling such problems. The Labour Government was in general formed of fairly

competent people who had, moreover, learned how to run the State in Churchill's own government. In the postwar years, the top men in the Conservative Party were weaker than the group in charge of Labour.

The Labour Government had to act under extremely complex and difficult conditions. The problems confronting them were enormous and it was not at all clear how they should be handled. War had inflicted less damage on Britain than on a number of other countries, but it had nevertheless seriously weakened her both economically and politically. The financial position had deteriorated and the war expenditures had totalled £25,000 million, as a result of which the national debt had increased threefold. Bomb damage, losses of ships and freight, fixed assets not renewed in industry and losses of capital investments abroad amounted to approximately one-quarter of the country's national wealth. Britain's output of industrial goods had fallen and exports had been reduced.

The British Government undertook a series of postwar measures to ensure the growth of industrial production in order to prevent the country falling behind its competitors. Investments in industry were increased. At the same time, at the expense of the state, i.e. the working people, a number of important branches of industry were nationalised (coal, electricity, gas, internal transport). As a result of these measures, one-quarter of the industrial and office personnel in Britain were employed in state-owned enterprises. In this way, capitalist contradictions accelerated the growth of monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism. Industrial production in Britain rose faster than during the period after the First World War, but more slowly than in a number of other countries.

To increase exports, Britain made use of the war-weakened position of certain of its rivals, and also the Imperial Preference system and the Sterling Bloc. However, successes were short-lived in this field too.

The decline of Britain's role in the capitalist world after the Second World War was caused by the disintegration of the colonial system, by enormous military expenditures—above all on the maintenance of troops abroad—and by the growth of parasitism and the decay of British capitalism as a result of the highly militarised economy and the considerably expanding state monopoly bureaucratic superstructure.

There are no grounds for Labour's claim that by nationalising a number of branches of industry they created a socialist sector of the economy in Britain, thereby changing the country's economy from capitalist to mixed. The Labour Government's nationalisation was capitalist in its nature, and the result was a strengthening of state monopoly capitalism, the creation of state property to meet the demands of the capitalist system. Labour's reforms in the field of social security, public education and the health service were likewise bourgeois in character. The exploitation of the working class in Britain intensified, and the workers had to stand up for their rights and standard of living in hard-fought strikes.

In the course of disintegration of the imperialist colonial system, that set in after the Second World War and continued through the Attlee Government's term in office, many of the British colonial peoples won freedom and created their own independent states. Among them were India, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon and a number of African territories. The disintegration of the British Empire seriously weakened British imperialism.

The Attlee-Bevin Labour Government did not keep its election promises either in home or in foreign policy. This is an old British political tradition and Labour were no exception. They immediately began to depart from the co-ordinated policy of the Allied Powers which had been formulated during the war years and, in co-operation with the US Administration, they embarked on an openly aggressive imperialist foreign policy.

The main objective of the British Government's foreign policy was the struggle against the world socialist system, against the national liberation, working class and socialist movements.

In violation of the 1942 Anglo-Soviet treaty, the Labour Government virtually liquidated Britain's alliance with the USSR immediately after the war and, together with the USA, launched a cold war on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. In alliance with the USA, the British Establishment sabotaged disarmament and endeavoured to prolong and intensify the cold war by every possible means, determinedly preparing for another world war.

To this end, they signed the aggressive North Atlantic Treaty with a number of other countries in April 1949,

rejected the policy agreed upon by the three powers at Potsdam concerning Germany, and set out on a course leading to her partition and the revival of militarism and revanchism in West Germany.

By dragging Britain into NATO, the Labour Government saddled the British people with a heavy armaments burden. After the victory of the People's Revolution in China, the Labour Government, in the hope of gaining economic and political advantages, legally recognised the People's Republic of China in January 1950. However, such moves by Britain in the Far East as joint participation with the USA in the aggressive war in Korea from 1950 onwards, the signing of a peace treaty with Japan in 1951 which turned her into a base for American aggression in the Far East, and the support of a number of other American imperialist moves hostile to the peoples of the Far East, showed that British foreign policy during that period was directed against the peoples of Asia and the Pacific Ocean.

During the six years of the Labour Government in office the British people became more and more convinced that their talk about socialism and the "welfare state" was a blind and that their home and foreign policies served the interests of monopoly capital.

This was the general situation in Britain when Churchill was Leader of His Majesty's Opposition and of the Conservative Party.

Although he had decided to carry out his duties as Leader of the Opposition and concern himself with all problems arising in the Commons, Churchill was not really interested in parliamentary matters during the postwar years. He was often absent from the House, and on the few occasions when he did appear, his speeches were not a success. He was principally concerned with a matter dear to his heart: writing a history of the Second World War.

Churchill's speeches during this period can be divided into two distinct kinds: he supported and approved the Government line in foreign policy matters, but was persistently and savagely critical on all issues of home and economic policy.

It was clear from his speeches that he had failed to understand the real economic and internal political predicament in which Britain found herself after the war. Churchill was unable to grasp that the Labour Government, with the

way things had developed at the time, had been deprived of the opportunity to set about abolishing the wartime state control over the country's economic life, that it could not follow any other financial policy, that it had no alternative but to nationalise certain branches of industry and, finally, that it had no alternative but to make a concession to the country's working class by introducing a new social security system. By putting through these measures, the Labour Government was saving British capitalism; it was saving the class which Winston Churchill himself represented and served faithfully all his life. This is best confirmed by the fact that, on returning to power in 1951, the Conservatives left intact the measures carried out by Attlee's Labour Government in the face of fierce criticism and opposition from Churchill.

In his accusations hurled at the Labour Government Churchill claimed that all the measures carried out by Labour were not dictated by necessity, but by their adherence to certain socialist doctrines. At the same time, he prophesied the inevitable collapse of the British economy as a direct result of the Government's actions.

Attacking the nationalisation of industry, state control over certain aspects of the country's economic life, and social reforms, Churchill seemed to have forgotten that he had advocated these very ideas at the beginning of the century when he was a Liberal minister. Speaking in Glasgow in 1906, he had caused quite a stir by suggesting that the state should become one of the employers and argued that it would be advantageous to nationalise the railways. One of Churchill's biographers wrote in 1961: "We must remind ourselves that this was said fifty years ago. Today it may seem to state the obvious.... State ownership of the railways and other public utilities was not achieved until 1947; and it was achieved by a Labour Government which remained unmoved by Churchill's reproach that it was following a course dictated by social prejudice and doctrinaire theory.... It was not as new as all that, as ... Churchill well knew. In 1945, it was Socialism. In 1906, Churchill did his best to prove that it was not. But if it wasn't, what was it?

"It was pure Lloyd Georgian Radicalism." The same writer commented: "Indeed, it is not difficult to find startling parallels between the utterances of Churchill in 1906 and of Attlee in 1945." And this was indeed the case.

When the Labour Government was putting a Bill through

the House of Commons to impose certain restrictions on the rights of the House of Lords, Churchill attacked the Government motion. The Labour leaders remembered perfectly well what Churchill had said on this subject before the First World War. They read out extracts in the Commons from many of his speeches of that period, when the Liberal Government was passing its own Bill on the Lords. This was a powerful argument. The Conservatives sat frowning, while there was laughter on the Labour benches. Churchill was clearly stymied, and this was not the only occasion of its kind in the early postwar years.

Out of key with the spirit of the times, ignoring the balance of forces in Parliament and, what mattered most of all, ignoring the mood of the British man in the street, Churchill's speeches were causing increasing annoyance among prominent figures in the Conservative Party. "Winston is ageing," observed Lord Moran. "His work is done; he is living in the past." The old Conservative leader's colleagues realised, as did many others, that the Labour Party was not at all what Churchill said it was and that Labour were carrying out a generally bourgeois-liberal policy advantageous to the British bourgeoisie.

Churchill was rather negligent about his duties as Leader of the Opposition. It never occurred to him that he should try in some way to forge the Conservatives in the House of Commons into a close-knit team working in concert under a single leadership. As Lord Moran commented, "now it is more the sterility of his mind that bothers thoughtful people. The once-teeming brain has run dry. Even when it is argued that the Conservatives ought to have a policy he grows impatient. The job of the leader of the Opposition, he says, is to attack the Government—that and no more". Churchill's speeches were often different from what his colleagues would have liked. He made them without asking anyone's advice and without consulting his Shadow Cabinet.

A number of middle-generation Conservatives, above all R.A. Butler, were taking vigorous steps at this time to restructure the party so that it would be fully mobilised and armed for the next General Election. After their failure to win a majority in the Commons by relying solely on Churchill's popularity, the Conservative leaders came to the conclusion that the electorate must be offered a constructive programme which would be attractive enough to win their

votes for the Conservatives. To this end, a series of programmes was drawn up, among which the greatest importance was attached to the Industrial Charter.

Churchill had nothing to do with all this. He not only declined to take part or show any interest, he even treated it with contempt. "It was rumoured," writes Virginia Cowles, "that he had never even bothered to read the Tory Industrial Charter which R.A. Butler had produced so painstakingly."

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party was not doing too well. The public continued to vote against the Conservatives at by-elections, with the result that they did not win a single seat. Virginia Cowles comments that the Conservatives whispered that things would be better if Churchill resigned and Eden took his place. At that time, the right-wing press was featuring articles with such significant headlines as: "Is Churchill a Liability to the Tories? " But Lord Beaverbrook's *Sunday Express* stoutly replied: "When Mr. Churchill is in his seat, the Opposition breathes fire."

The Conservative Party's position was indeed complicated. Churchill's stubborn and extremely reactionary attitude and his inability to adapt to the new situation were doing the Conservatives real harm. But at the same time, the Conservative Party could not manage without Churchill. They did not have enough outstanding leaders who were really popular with the public and who could take over the reins and command the attention of the electorate. There was no escaping the fact that Churchill had been the country's leader during the war and his fame and popularity were the card which the Conservatives played in their battle for the sympathies of the man in the street.

This situation was convincingly summed up by Aneurin Bevan when he spoke in the House of Commons in 1949. He pointed out Churchill's true function and position in the Conservative Party. "The right hon. Gentleman thinks," said Bevan, "that he is the Leader of the Conservative Party. He is not. He is their decoy. There is a little disturbance going on at the moment inside the Conservative Party as to whether the right hon. Gentleman is a liability or an asset. It is a very considerable disturbance." Reminding Churchill of his position in the party on the eve of the Second World War, Bevan asked: "Does he not remember that, although he was himself one of the most brilliant Parliamentarians of the day, a crowd of mediocrities kept him out of office for nine years, and

that when eventually, in the war years, it became necessary to have a leader from that side of the House ... with unrivalled gifts of speech and of evoking courage, it was the Labour Party that virtually made him Prime Minister?

"I do beg and pray the right hon. Gentleman to realise that." Referring to Churchill's earlier speeches, Bevan showed that he himself considered the Conservatives responsible for the failure of the British Government's policy on the eve of the Second World War. "But those are the people Churchill would lead back," declared Bevan. "There they are. Those are the guilty men—all of them....

"Does he think the nation would be grateful to him if he could persuade the nation to put that lot of bankrupt intelligence back into office again? "

Much of what Bevan said was true. Churchill could not command the respect of the Conservatives, but he was a useful decoy in their hands and they made considerable use of him. Indeed, struggling for the overthrow of the Labour Government and for the return of the Conservatives to power, Churchill was trying to foist upon the British people a group of bankrupt reactionary politicians who had discredited themselves and the Conservative Party back in the thirties. But what else could he offer? This was the group that had ruled the party and kept Churchill as its leader.

Between 1945 and 1951, the British press gave Churchill a great deal of publicity. He wrote numerous articles, travelled abroad, made speeches, and appeared as guest of honour at many meetings and gatherings, displaying considerable reserves of energy.

But this was not the full extent of Churchill's activities. He again spent much time on his painting, and he exhibited at the Royal Academy. He developed a passion for farming. He bought 500 acres of land near Chartwell and started up a stock farm. Although in his declining years, he began to take an interest in horse-racing. He bred race-horses which, although they did not actually win, were moderately successful.

But the most important of all his interests was his six-volume history of the Second World War. Churchill had been preparing to write this work at the time when he was Prime Minister. He profited fully from his experience with his book *The World Crisis.* On becoming a member of the Chamberlain Government, and then Prime Minister, Churchill

preserved copies of all the most important documents which passed through his hands, and there were a great many. He loved expressing his ideas in writing and prepared endless memos and instructions on many important matters and also on some of a secondary nature.

Churchill did not conduct his correspondence with President Roosevelt and J.V. Stalin in the form of official documents sent out by the Government, but by private letters, which were also carefully copied so that they could be used subsequently for future books. After Churchill had to retire, all this material, together with many other supplementary documents, was assembled at Chartwell and used as the foundation for the projected work. According to British traditions, all State papers retained by generals and Ministers upon their retirement automatically become their private property. Churchill made full use of this rule.

Writing the history of the Second World War was a large-scale enterprise. Virginia Cowles writes that Churchill "still held to his theory that it was foolish to indulge in detailed work that others could do for him.

"His first step, therefore, was to assemble a large and competent staff to check facts, sort material, produce memoranda, collect information, and give advice. He gathered around him naval, military and air experts, scientists, historians and classical scholars, not to mention a competent team of secretaries who worked day and night on eight-hour shifts". Malcolm Muggeridge, a distinguished British journalist, wrote that Churchill "developed a faculty for 'organising large works'. *His Marlborough*, *The World Crisis*, and still more *The Second World War*, must be considered as, in a sense, the productions of a committee rather than of an individual author." True, Muggeridge also comments that the presentation of the material in this and similar works is invariably Churchillian, as are the evaluations, conclusions and conceptions.

Many people had a personal interest in being referred to in the projected work and, moreover, in being mentioned at length and in favourable terms. Consequently, apart from the impressive staff permanently employed by Churchill, he was able to make wide additional use of the services of major personalities and experts. Former military men, politicians and businessmen readily responded to Churchill's requests for them to put down on paper in as much detail as possbile this

or that incident or event in which they were involved during the war years.

True to his custom, Churchill did not write but dictated his memoirs. Working, in effect, two shifts a day, he could turn out eight or nine thousand words. The leading American and British periodicals competed for the right to be first to serialise the memoirs. The *Life* magazine is said to have bought the serial rights for something like $2 million. Add the fees for publishing the history of the war in other press organs and also the royalties from the separate six-volume edition in a number of countries, and it is possible to imagine what an enormous sum of money must have accrued to Churchill from this literary undertaking.

When one publisher asked Churchill if he would agree to let him bring out the book on which he was working, Churchill said: "I'm not writing a book, I'm developing a property." And this was true. "It is reasonable to guess," wrote *The Sunday Times* in 1965, "that few authors in the twentieth century have earned more money from their books".

Churchill was not embarrassed by a remark once passed by Arthur Balfour that he had written his autobiography covering the period of the First World War and had called it *The World Crisis*. He was now writing his autobiography for the period 1918-45 and had called it *The Second World War*. The scope of the work is enormous. He traces world history in detail over a quarter of a century. Events develop mainly in Europe, of course, but Churchill also writes about America, Asia, Africa and Australia. The central figure of the events is Churchill himself. One is left with the impression that he was the prime motive force of these events, the centre of world history during the period covered.

For Churchill, history was always a tale of achievements by good and evil characters acting against the background of a faceless, inert human mass. The history of the Second World War was also written from this viewpoint. Needless to say, the leading positive character in the works is the author. Anything good or reasonable done during the war years was primarily due to him. Anything bad is explained away by invoking the evil genius of Hitler and his like or the incompetence and folly of the statesmen of Britain, France, the USA and other countries.

The range of *The Second World War* is far greater than

that of *The World Crisis*. While in *The World Crisis* Churchill described his struggle with British politicians, especially Asquith, in *The Second World War* he is acting on the world arena, on a global scale. This time, he is struggling with Hitler, co-operating with Roosevelt, denouncing Mussolini, exposing the Japanese leaders, working with Stalin since 1941 and then, after 1943, struggling with him within the framework of that co-operation.

Churchill frequently reproached peoples who, as he thought, were often unable to react sensibly to events, choose the right course of action and promote the most competent leaders. He often mentions various personalities with whom he kept in contact. He portrays some of those close to him favourably and often calls them his friends. But the reader, as he follows the author, is inevitably convinced what an enormous difference there is between them and Churchill: they all seem Lilliputians overshadowed by this towering Gulliver.

The second character in *The Second World War* is Britain. The author spares none of the colours on his rich literary palette to affirm Britain's greatness. In this, Churchill is not merely a patriot of imperialist Britain. For him, Britain and the British are unique, they stand superior to all states and peoples. "His defence of the fame, honour and mission of the British race," writes Lord Chandos, "are the thematic part of all his works."

When writing his history of the Second World War, Churchill had to solve a number of complex problems. If one compares the last volume of his *The World Crisis* with the first volume of *The Second World War*, it is impossible not to be struck by the difference in tone and in approach to the treatment of certain events. In the last volume of *The World Crisis*, Soviet Russia is depicted as the worst enemy of Britain and the rest of mankind. In order to deal with this foe, Churchill puts forward the idea of an alliance with Germany and the renaissance of that country's might. In the first volume of *The Second World War*, Churchill affirms that the forces of evil were concentrated in Germany which now constituted a threat to Britain and the whole world. Such a threat could only be averted by an alliance with the USSR. In this way, the treatment of the problems is completely the reverse.

The theme of the first volume of *The Second World War*,

according to Churchill, is "How the English-Speaking Peoples Through Their Unwisdom, Carelessness and Good Nature Allowed the Wicked To Rearm". When he was writing this, Churchill probably assumed that the reader had forgotten what he had said in *The World Crisis* about his talk with Lloyd George on the evening of 11 November 1918, when they discussed the need to build Germany up again for the struggle against Soviet Russia. It was this line in British foreign policy that led to the "forces of evil" rearming. In blaming the English-speaking peoples for this, Churchill is trying to shift the blame from himself and other British politicians and pass it on to the peoples by representing them as unwise and irresponsible.

Since, during the Second World War, Churchill had entered into an alliance with the USSR, he could not give full rein to his anti-Soviet feelings in the first volume of his history, otherwise the implication would have been that as a statesman during the Second World war he committed mistakes. This explains the author's restrained attitude to the Soviet Union and even, at times, the favourable assessment of Soviet foreign policy on the eve and in the course of the Second World War. Churchill could not hush up the decisive contribution made by the Soviet Union to the defeat of fascism. To have ignored a fact of such historical importance would have reduced Churchill's status in the eyes of the serious reader. Moreover, it would have meant raising doubts about the wisdom of his policy of an alliance with the Soviet Union during the war, a policy which made it possible for Britain to escape a crushing defeat. True, Churchill gave rein to his anti-Sovet feelings in the sixth, and last, volume of a work which he entitled *Triumph and Tragedy*. In it, he defies the truth in an attempt to assert that the British Government carried out an honest and conscientious policy aimed at the preservation of a great alliance, but that the alliance had been destroyed owing to the actions of the Soviet Government. But even in this volume he does not express any doubts about the expedience of the alliance with the USSR during the war years.

Churchill was a consistent advocate of close relations between Britain and the United States of America. He hammers this idea home throughout all six volumes of the history of the Second World War. However, the Americans as portrayed by Churchill are ill-disposed to England and

unwise, often revealing during the war an inability to assess the world situation correctly. Churchill has much to say about how during the war the US Government tried to encroach on Britain's interests in the international, economic and colonial spheres. He depicts himself as a man who dealt a vigorous rebuff to these attempts on the part of the United States. And he is true to facts.

In summing up the results of the Second World War, Churchill misrepresents the development of events and the resulting state of affairs. He considers that the war ended tragically for Britain and world capitalism owing to the ill will of the Soviet Government and thoughtlessness of the American Government, which ignored Churchill's appeals that the Soviet Union should be driven out of Eastern Europe by force of Anglo-American arms in the spring of 1945 and that the rising socialist revolution there should be crushed. In his book, Churchill actually reveals himself as a highly irresponsible man in a highly important government post, for the reader inevitably comes to the conclusion that in the spring of 1945 he was ready to unleash a third world war even before the second ended.

In *The Second World War*, he widely adduces only the facts which testify in his favour and contribute to the aggrandisement of Britain and himself personally. Any other facts which do not fit into his conceptual framework are completely ignored.

In 1949, Aneurin Bevan said of Churchill in the House of Commons: "He is known as a very great stylist and one who reads his prose with delight.

"A reason why he moves gracefully across the pages is because he carries a light weight of fact.

"He sub-edits history, and if there is any disagreeable fact, overboard it goes. This has always been characteristic of the right hon. Gentleman."

Lord Chandos tells of an incident characteristic of the way Churchill dealt with the facts when writing *The Second World War*. During the war, Chandos, then still Oliver Lyttelton, was Britain's Minister of State in the Middle East. Churchill once instructed him to arrange the urgent unloading of tanks that a ship had brought from England. The instructions were carried out, but Churchill was dissatisfied and sent a telegram to Lyttelton reprimanding him for not carrying out the order efficiently enough. The accusation was

unfounded and Oliver Lyttelton replied to Churchill that "his telegram was most unfair and should be immediately withdrawn". Naturally, the Prime Minister did not even consider doing so. But later, two years after the war, General Pownall, who was helping Churchill go through his war archives and was selecting documents to be used in *The Second World War*, phoned Lyttelton and asked permission for the telegram to be published. The reply was: "Of course, but on one condition that he also publishes my answer." Needless to say, neither the first nor the second telegram ever saw the light of day.

In spite of their obvious bias, Churchill's six volumes about the war are of undeniable interest for the informed reader and particularly for the historian concerned with the Second World War. Their value is not so much in the author's text as in the copious extracts from an enormous number of official documents which Churchill had in his possession. It was in these volumes that he first published a considerable part of the correspondence between the British Prime Minister and J.V. Stalin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and President Roosevelt of the USA. Churchill's own text is essentially a kind of link-up between the numerous documents and a commentary upon them. A great many documents are given in the Appendix to each volume.

The use of documents in the book is highly tendentious: the author remains silent about a number of important items, publishes documents in extract form, and only quotes passages taken out of their context that are suitable to him. "He will, I expect," writes Lord Chandos, "prove to be the best documented Prime Minister that ever held the post. It will be surprising if these documents. when examined in a few years by historians, do not give a highly subjective view of the scene. The replies of his Ministers and his correspondents hardly find a place in his own history of the Second World War. Time and the scholars will gradually adjust the balance."

Churchill's six volumes on the Second World War are not, of course, a work of historical research. But they contain valuable material which no historian can dispense with when dealing with the problems of the Second World War. "*The World Crisis* and *The Second World War*", writes Malcolm Muggeridge, "belong irretrievably to the present, and as it

recedes tend to fade like old newspapers. They are photographs rather than paintings; they are oratory rather than literature; they are, in the highest and greatest sense, journalism rather than history."

Churchill had long ago developed his own monumental style of recording the events of history. Many pages of his work bear the undoubted stamp of creative talent, and all six volumes are widely known in Britain. Churchill was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, in particular for his history of the Second World War. Needless to say, the book's political slant also played its part.

Churchill wrote his war memoirs in the years when he had openly returned to his old policy of hostility to the Soviet Union and the cause of socialism. It is therefore natural that his book should be an explanation of the reasons for the alliance between Britain and the USSR during the war and also an ideological preparation for the transition to the blatantly anti-Soviet line which, as ex-Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, he adopted in the postwar period.

Churchill's speeches on matters of home policy while he was in the Opposition in the Commons were usually unsuccessful and dull. His speeches on foreign policy, however, were of considerable importance and attracted wide public attention. The most important of the speeches on this level was made at Fulton, USA, on 5 March 1946.

In the winter of 1945-46, Churchill spent several months in the United States. He met President Truman, the heads of the State Department and other officials. During these meetings, the idea came up that Churchill should make a speech on world policy problems, and its general line was determined. The main propositions were drawn up in agreement with President Truman on 10 February. Churchill spent several weeks at a health resort in Florida where he perfected and polished his speech. When everything was ready, he and Truman went to Fulton, Missouri, where, at Westminster College on 5 March 1946, he delivered the address that was to be the cause of so much uproar.

As is known, Attlee, Bevin, and also President Truman and US Secretary of State Byrnes, knew that this speech was to be made and had given their agreement. Truman even travelled a long distance to introduce Churchill to the audience. All these facts prove that Churchill did not only express his personal views, but promulgated the anti-Soviet

programme of the power elite both in Britain and in the United States of America.

In Britain, Churchill could not have publicly announced the cold war against the Soviet Union. Such a speech could have ended very embarrassingly for him at that time. Not long before, the British people had voted Churchill and his party out of office in the General Election, thereby declaring their disagreement with the former government's foreign policy line which Churchill had now formulated in the Fulton speech. Taking into consideration the state of affairs in Britain, the Labour leaders did not dare express official solidarity with Churchill; they were to do that several years later. It was another matter in the USA, where the Government openly preached Churchill's anti-Soviet ideas. Truman's presence at Fulton underlined the importance attached in America to this speech. Furthermore, the United States was obliged, by virture of its position in the capitalist world, to play the leading role in carrying out Churchill's proposed plan.

To the great astonishment of his audience, the speaker announced that they were in direct and immediate danger of another world war and tyranny, and that the cause of this threat was the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Needless to say, the USSR was no more of a threat to Britain and the USA then than it is now. The Soviet Union paid with colossal human and material losses for victory over fascism and was solely concerned to restore what had been destroyed by the aggressors and to progress further along the road of communist construction.

He declared that the main purpose of his speech was to propose the creation of a "fraternal association of English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States.... Fraternal association requires not only the growing friendship and mutual understanding between our two vast but kindred systems of society, but the continuance of the intimate relationships between our military advisers, leading to common study of potential dangers, the similarity of weapons and manuals of instruction and to the interchange of officers and cadets at technical colleges. It should carry with it the continuance of the present facilities for mutual security by the joint use of all Naval and Air Force bases in the possession of either country all over the world.

"This would perhaps double the mobility of the American navy and air force. It would greatly expand that of the British Empire's Forces and it might well lead, if and as the world calms down, to important financial savings.... Eventually there may come the principle of common citizenship, but that we may be content to leave to destiny, whose outstretched arm so many of us can clearly see."

Churchill tried to put the wind up the people in the USA, Britain and other countries: "Beware, I say: time may be short. Do not let us take the course of letting events drift along till it is too late."

Who was to be the target of the Anglo-American military alliance? Churchill made his meaning absolutely clear—the alliance was to be against the Soviet Union and the developing socialist revolution. Churchill used in his speech a term which was to become very popular with anti-Soviet propagandists—"the iron curtain" which, he claimed, had descended on the continent of Europe, dividing it from Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic. He clearly did not like the way that the peoples east of that line, including the Soviet Union, were organising their lives.

Condemning the revolutionary transformations in the countries of Eastern Europe, Churchill indicated what he had in mind for these countries. "Athens alone," he said, "with its immortal glories, is free to decide its future at an election under British, American and French observation." But Athens was a symbol of the ineradicable shame with which Churchill covered himself in 1944 when he ordered his troops to fire on Greeks who were Britain's allies. It was now his dream that British and American troops should fire on the peoples of Eastern Europe and then saddle them with anti-democratic political regimes "under British, American, and French observation".

Churchill recommended the use of force against the USSR, and soon—while the USA had the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union had not yet developed it. Churchill made it absolutely clear that he meant the application of force against the USSR. "From what I have seen of our Russian friends and allies during the war," he said, "I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength." He proposed achieving in 1946 "a good understanding on all points with Russia". This means that if the Soviet Union did not capitulate when threatened with the use of force, then it

would be essential to start a preventive war against it.

Churchill was no longer content with the traditional British principle of a balance of power when Britain had carried out its policy on the continent of Europe by playing one country off against the other. "The old doctrine of a balance of power is unsound," he said. "We cannot afford, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins offering temptations to a trial of strength." He formulated a new policy for the imperialists which was subsequently to become known as the "position of strength" policy.

The "good understanding on all points with Russia" which Churchill hoped for was to be "supported by the whole strength of the English-speaking world and all its connections". In this way, the idea was expressed of setting up Anglo-American world domination. There was nothing new about this. Churchill was known to have been harbouring it throughout the whole of the Second World War. He believed that if Britain and the USA could suppress the revolutionary movements and subject the Soviet Union to their will, they would be able to ensure domination over the world for the next hundred years. "If the population of the English-speaking Commonwealths be added to that of the United States, with all that such co-operation implies in the air, on the sea, and in science and industry, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure..., if all British moral and material forces and convictions are joined with your own in fraternal association, the highroads of the future will be clear, not only for us but for all, not only for our time but for a century to come."

As usual, Churchill behaved with incredible aplomb when delivering his address at Fulton. He announced that he intended to define the task facing humankind and explain how it should be accomplished. Then, true to his custom, Churchill did not refrain from pointing out that in the latter half of the thirties, when a second world war was imminent, he alone had offered the right advice on how it should be averted, but his efforts had failed because those in power at the time had proved incapable of understanding the full significance of his suggestions. This was not merely Churchill's habitual self-advertisement. He was also implying that the counsel he was giving to mankind on this occasion was as well-founded and justified as his attitude on the eve of the

Second World War.

The essence of Churchill's Fulton speech was as follows: the Soviet Union was the main threat to the security and freedom of all other nations, and therefore mankind must unite under Anglo-American leadership and avert this threat by use of force. Churchill was thus trying to stir up the whole world against the Soviet people. All this was being said less than a year after the Soviet people, at the cost of appalling sacrifices and sufferings, had ensured the defeat of fascism and had brought freedom to the enslaved peoples; after Britain, thanks to the sacrifices, had been saved from the threat of imminent destruction; and it was being said at the time when, as Anglo-American military experts belived, Britain and the USA would still have been fighting a war with Japan in the Far East, if the Soviet Union had not stepped in on the side of the Allies, thereby ensuring its swift and early conclusion.

To claim after all this that the Soviet people were the main threat to mankind was a gross slanderous insult. Churchill was a man of powerful emotions. But probably his most powerful emotion was hatred for the peoples of the Soviet Union, whose sin was that they had built their own life in accordance with their own desires and ways of thinking, and not as Winston Churchill would have approved. *The New York Times* staff wrote in its *Churchill. In Memoriam* that he "looked upon Russia as a half-Asian land-mass alien to Europe".

It is not surprising that people in the Soviet Union should have been outraged by Churchill's Fulton speech, for they now realised that he was calling for another military campaign against the Soviet Union. Inevitable parallels were drawn between what Churchill was demanding and what, in their time, the German Nazis had sought to achieve. Churchill, like his Nazi predecessors, was trying to incite a world war and was trumpeting world domination by one race over all the others.

In an interview with a *Pravda* correspondent, J.V. Stalin declared: "Mr. Churchill has, in point of fact, taken up the position of war instigator. And Mr. Churchill is not alone in this—he has friends not only in Britain, but in the United States of America as well." Stalin later noted that, in his Fulton speech, Churchill was strikingly reminiscent of Hitler: "Hitler went about the business of unleashing a war by

promulgating a racist theory, announcing that the German-speaking peoples were the master race. Mr. Churchill likewise begins the business of unleashing a war with a racist theory, claiming that the English-speaking nations are the master race called upon to fulfil the destinies of the whole world.... The British racist theory leads Mr. Churchill and his friends to the conclusion that the English-speaking nations, as the master race, must dominate the other nations of the world. In point of fact, Mr. Churchill and his friends in Britain and the USA are offering the non-English-speaking nations something in the nature of an ultimatum: recognise our domination voluntarily, and then everything will be settled,—otherwise, war is inevitable.... There can be no doubt that Mr. Churchill's aim is war, a call to war with the USSR."

Churchill's address also echoed the German Nazi speeches on another plane. He used the expression "the iron curtain", which came to be used millions of times in various versions by the enemies of the USSR and other socialist countries. "This formula," writes R. Palme Dutt, "is universally stated to have been coined by the genius of Sir Winston Churchill in his Fulton speech in March 1946. But in fact it was first used in this sense ... by Josef Goebbels in an editorial published in *Das Reich* on February 25, 1945.... [It] continues to be used on every side without recognition of its Nazi origin. If a royalty had to be paid for its use each time by Western publicists and politicians to the original author, the shade of Goebbels would now be the wealthiest shade in Hades."

Churchill's speech caused alarm in the bourgeois world. Very many realised that it was a call to unleash another world war. In the British Parliament, over a hundred Labour members put up a resolution condemning Churchill's address. Attlee's Government, however, avoided officially disclaiming the ideas preached by the former Prime Minister at Fulton. They hypocritically announced that they represented the private views of a private person. In actual fact, Attlee and Bevin had already approved Churchill's speech and were fully in agreement with it, but did not dare admit it at the time. The whole of Labour's subsequent foreign policy was carried out in conformity with the ideas outlined at Fulton.

The Communist Party of Great Britain publicly denounced the imperialist programme formulated by Churchill. The Communist press attacked not only its anti-Soviet tendency and its unbridled hostility to the cause of socialism

and progress, but also showed that Churchill's programme was essentially one of preparations to unleash another world war.

In March 1947, the American Government announced the Truman Doctrine, and this meant that the foreign policy plan proposed by Churchill had been accepted as State policy. As a result of efforts by Britain and the USA, aggressive military-political blocs were set up against the USSR and the socialist and national liberation movements. This was the Fulton programme in action.

The imperialist politicians and ideologists have gone to great pains to convince the world that Britain and the USA had started their cold war against the USSR in response to a number of actions on its part. Among the reasons usually given are the socialist countries' refusal to take part in the Marshall Plan, the creation of the Informbureau of Communist and Workers' Parties, and the victory of the democratic forces in Czechoslovakia in 1948. These assertions do not fit the universally known facts. No one in the West today doubts that the Western Alliance and NATO were the implementation of the Fulton speech and the Truman Doctrine. The speech was made in March 1946 and the doctrine was announced in March 1947, which means that the power elite in Britain and the USA raised the banner of the cold war before the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies rejected the Marshall Plan in the summer of 1947, before the Informbureau was founded in September 1947, and before the events in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 finally put that country on the road to democratic development.

Churchill soon launched another violent campaign. In the autumn of 1946, he was holidaying in Switzerland on the shore of Lake Geneva and, in the shadow of Mont Blanc, was preparing an address similar in tone to the Fulton speech. Churchill delivered it at Zürich University.

This time, he proposed forming a so-called United States of Europe with the aim of setting it up in opposition to the Soviet Union and destroying, through the combined efforts of European reaction, the democratic and socialist gains of the East European nations. "And why," demanded Churchill, "should there not be a European group which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this turbulent and

mighty continent? " Germany, according to Churchill, would become the main power in a united Europe. People could still vividly remember the time when the Nazis had been trying to create a united Europe under German leadership. Now Churchill was asking them to forget the crimes of nazism for the sake of the future. "We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past," he said. "We must look to the future ..., there must be an act of faith in the European family and an act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past."

Churchill was again demanding that a united Europe should be created immediately, for there was no time to spare. He was in a hurry, afraid that the Soviet Union would soon draw level with America in the military and technological field, and frightened by the revolutionary process which was developing with particular speed in Europe and the Far East at that time. And all this with the aim, as he wrote later in his memoirs, of stopping Soviet Russia.

Churchill himself was prepared to go to extremes in his hostility to the USSR. In a speech at a Conservative Party Conference in October 1948, he suggested that a series of stringent demands should be made to the Soviet Union with no delay. In an editorial devoted to this speech, *Pravda* wrote: "Churchill demands neither more nor less than the abolition of the People's Democracies in the East European countries; the withdrawal of the Soviet occupation forces from Germany and Austria; the self-disbandment of the communist movements in all countries, and at the same time of the liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies; finally, opening the way for the international monopolies to the exploitation of the 'vast spaces' of the USSR, that is, in the final analysis, the revival in the Soviet Union of the capitalist order and renunciation of its independence." Churchill claimed that a "settlement with Soviet Russia" by peaceful means was unthinkable, and he called on the capitalist Powers to start a war against the USSR without delay "while they have the atomic power and before the Russian Communists have got it too". It was a far-reaching plan to unleash an immediate war of aggression on the USSR and other states of the socialist community.

Lord Moran tells how, on 8 August 1946, he had a talk with Churchill in the course of which "Winston spoke gloomily of the future.

" 'You think there will be another war?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'You mean in ten years' time? '

" 'Sooner. Seven or eight years. I shan't be there.'

"I asked him if it would be between Russia and her satellite countries and the Anglo-Saxon countries.

" 'Yes, with France and Scandinavia and Belgium and Holland on our side.'

"I wondered how England could take part in an atomic war when she was so small. He said: 'We ought not to wait until Russia is ready. I believe it will be eight years before she has these bombs.' "

Two months later, in October 1946, the conversation returned to this subject.

Moran: "You mean there might be war in two or three years' time? "

Winston: "Perhaps sooner than that, perhaps this winter."

It would be a mistake to suppose that Churchill was alone in planning to wipe out socialism through the world, especially in the USSR. His views were shared by influential circles in Britain and the United States of America. Churchill was merely a powerful spokesman for these circles. A report prepared by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1950 stated: "There is every reason to regard as one area the territories of Europe from the English Channel to the Soviet frontier of 1938; the proper purpose of Western policy will not be attained until they are all free partners in one Europe." This must be taken to mean that the imperialist Powers should aim at the restoration of capitalism in the People's Democracies and the expulsion of the USSR from a number of its territories. Churchill's speeches calling for a general campaign by the bourgeois world against the USSR and socialism convincingly proved that the British electorate had been right in 1945, when they did not trust the Conservative leader to pursue a postwar foreign policy in line with the nation's fundamental interests.

The Labour leaders thought otherwise. Their foreign policy over six postwar years was to all intents and purposes the fulfilment of Churchill's avowed intentions. In 1947, Britain and France signed an alliance which was the first step towards creating bigger anti-Soviet blocs. In 1948, thanks mainly to the efforts of the British Government, a western European Union was formed. A year later, a powerful

military-political bloc was created—the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, with the participation of the United States of America. The British Government was one of the most active organisers of this alliance of the imperialist powers to preserve the capitalist world and to struggle against the revolutionary movement both within the member-countries of the alliance and outside them, to struggle against the national liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries, and above all to struggle against the Soviet Union and the other socialist states which had emerged in Europe and Asia after the Second World War. When the United States organised the war against the Korean people in 1950, the Labour Government put the armed forces of Britain and several other countries of the British Empire alongside the troops of the American interventionists fighting in Korea.

The man who most consistently and determinedly implemented Churchill's foreign policy ideas was Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. Churchill valued him more than any of the other Labour politicians who had worked with him in the wartime Coalition Government. "This," writes Emrys Hughes, "was because he regarded Bevin, who had been a loyal member of his wartime Cabinet, as a sort of Labour 'John Bull' who was carrying out the traditional British continuity of foreign policy and one whom the permanent staff of the Foreign Office had well under control. Besides, Ernest Bevin was bitterly anti-Communist."

The next General Election was held in Britain on February 23, 1950. The Labour Government, which had involved the country in the arms race and realised that there was going to be a considerable reduction in the standard of living for the working people in the very near future, held the election a short time before their term of office expired. The Conservatives were well prepared for the Elections. They had reorganised the party apparatus and published a number of programmes intended to portray them as champions of the people's interests in the eyes of the electorate. The Labour election programme was much more modest that the one they had put forward in 1945. There was no talk of continuing nationalisation of vital branches of British industry. The programmes of both parties were imbued with animosity towards the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, but this was camouflaged with hypocritical claims that the British Government was pursuing its foreign policy in the interests of

international peace and security.

Cashing in on the British people's desire for friendship and co-operation with the USSR, Churchill placarded his election campaign with the "idea of another talk with Soviet Union on the highest level". He hoped to convince the electorate that he was preoccupied with achieving normal relations between Britain and the USSR and also to remind the public that he had successfully co-operated with the Soviet Government during the war, doing so by means of high-level talks. There was, in fact, nothing more behind this statement than the desire to pull in the voters and make them forget what he had said at Fulton, in Zurich, at Llandudno, and in many other places. Giving himself a get-out in advance, Churchill announced that much would depend on the position adopted by the United States of America. Even his Labour friend, Bevin, commented that Churchill's promise to arrange a summit meeting with the representatives of the USSR and the USA was a pre-election gimmick. And this was how it actually turned out.

The election results were determined by the fact that the Labour Government had disappointed the people with their reactionary foreign policy. Furthermore, its home reforms had fallen far short of what the people had hoped for. The Conservatives—without Churchill's personal help—carried out their election campaign in a more organised and considered way.

As a result of the election, Labour obtained only 315 seats in the new Parliament, while the Conservatives and their affiliated groups strengthened their position considerably by getting 298.

The Attlee Government stayed in power, relying on a small majority in the Commons. This made the Government's position very insecure and meant that another General Election would most likely be held in the very near future.

Chapter 12

Twilight of His Political Career

"The bulldog has dropped his bone again," writes Emrys Hughes, referring to Churchill's failure to return to office in the Parliamentary elections of 1950.

After this new setback Churchill concentrated all his energy on attacking the Labour Government. Through his attempts to thoroughly discredit it, Churchill hoped to hasten a general election, and finally seize the sought-after bone. While previously he had confined himself to criticising the Labour Government over its domestic policy, he now expanded his attacks to its policy of rearmament. Churchill was not, of course, campaigning against the arms race: he was arguing that they were going about it in quite the wrong way, and not as it would be done if he were Prime Minister.

It is unlikely that Churchill's attacks did very much to weaken the Labour Party's position. The Labour Government was undermined by the fact that its policies ran counter to the interests of the people, lowering their standard of living and bringing nearer the danger of war. These factors led to sharp disagreement within the Labour Party, causing the resignation in April 1951 of Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Labour and National Service, and of certain other, less prominent politicians. Those who resigned were considered left-wing, and among them was a future Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. At that time, in 1951, these politicians were to the left of Attlee, Morrison and many other Labour

leaders, but they subsequently moved to the right, to take the standard rightist-Labour position. This is quite normal and has happened to several of the British left-wingers who have risen to the party's upper echelons. They generally exchange their left-wing persuasions for ministerial portfolios, or, as was the case with Bevan, for the mere prospect of such a portfolio. There are few genuinely left-wing politicians in the higher reaches of the Labour Party; they are to be sought rather amongst the rank-and-file members of the party.

The unfavourable situation in both the country and the party forced the Labour Government to call on early General Election on 25 October 1951.

The main issue in the election was that of war or peace. The people had grown tired of two-faced Labour ministers who set themselves up as socialists and acted like imperialists. They were disenchanted with their actions and wished to see others in their place. But ordinary people were fearful that Conservative ministers would involve the country in a major war the moment they came to power. For this reason, the Conservatives did all in their power to allay such fears. This was no easy task, in view of their real foreign policy stand.

Churchill was very concerned that he should not be regarded as an advocate of war, so he said once again that discussions would be arranged with the heads of the American and Soviet Governments if the Conservatives came to power.

The British press discussed in detail what the consequences would be for peace if Churchill regained control of the British war machine. When the *Daily Mirror* put on its front page an enormous picture of a hand with its finger on the trigger of a revolver, Churchill took the paper to court and sued it for damages. Churchill won his case, the paper made a public apology to him and paid a large sum in damages, which he donated to old people's homes.

The Conservatives won the election, but failed to gain the stable majority on which Churchill was counting. In the new House of Commons the Conservatives had 321 seats to the Labour Party's 295.

The election results were published on 25 October 1951, and the next day Churchill once again, for the third and last time, became Prime Minister. The key posts in his Government went to the Conservative old guard. Anthony Eden

received his traditional job of Foreign Secretary. R.A. Butler, who had done much to adapt the party's policy declarations to the new political situation, received the portfolio of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lord Woolton, who had led the reorganisation of the Conservative Party, became Lord President of the Council. Churchill's old assistant, Professor Lindemann, now Lord Cherwell, was appointed Paymaster-General.

In accordance with his wartime innovation, Churchill took for himself the portfolio of Minister of Defence, putting himself at the heat of the Admiralty, the Army and the Air Ministries. However, this practice proved unnecessary in peacetime, and Churchill's strength was no longer what it had been, so he soon gave up the post.

On this occasion, Churchill became Prime Minister at the age of 77. To all appearances, even at this age he was still in full health and quite vigorous. In actual fact, though, Churchill's powerful constitution had begun to falter. He was growing deaf, and the doctors were powerless to help. His deafness worsened considerably as a result of the strain of the October 1951 election. Reflecting on Churchill's health during the elections, Moran came to the conclusion: "If he wins this election and goes back to No. 10 I doubt whether he is up to the job. In the fourteen months ... he has lost ground and has no longer the same grip on things and events."

Initially, his last term of office as Prime Minister gave Churchill great satisfaction. He realised that in 1940 he had been made head of the Government owing to the special conditions prevailing at the time. In 1951, however, he had acceded to the post of Prime Minister in full accordance with British tradition, as the head of the party which won the election.

When the Conservative Ministers took their places on the Treasury Bench (i.e. the first bench, traditionally occupied by the members of the Government) in the House of Commons, everyone had fresh memories of Churchill's fierce attacks on the Labour Government from 1945 to 1951, and of his speeches against his political opponents during the previous two electoral campaigns. Political observers were thus amazed by the calmness and reserve with which Churchill now began his work as Prime Minister. "What the nation needs," he said, "is several years of good, steady

administration. What the House needs is a period of tolerant and constructive debating on the merits of the question before us, without every speech on either side being dictated by the passions of one election or preparations for another."

There were two main reasons for Churchill's new restraint. The Attlee-Bevin Government's foreign policy and armaments policy had been in full accord with his own views, so he considered that no changes were called for in these areas. His Government simply continued the policies of its Labour predecessors without any substantial modification.

Having himself criticised the Labour Government for its unsatisfactory management of the rearmament of Britain, he now surprised many people by deciding to cut back on the rearmament programme. Attlee's Government had intended to spend $4,700 million on the arms race in three years, but Churchill decided to spread this sum over a period of four years. This did not mean, however, that Churchill's Government was anxious to curb rearmament. They realised that the arms burden placed on the nation by the Labour Government was too heavy for the British economy, and, fearing an economic collapse, they lessened it.

The Conservatives did not introduce any radical changes in domestic policy either, although this area of the Labour Government's operations had previously come in for severe criticism from Churchill. The social security system continued to function under the Conservatives just as it had when it was created by Labour in the early postwar years. Even in a matter as vital for the Conservatives as nationalisation, Churchill's Government made no substantial changes. Only the steel industry and road transport were denationalised. This meant that the top end of the British bourgeoisie, of which Churchill was both representative and spokesman, regarded the Attlee Government's economic and social reforms as being concordant with their own interests.

The divide between the Conservative and the Labour Parties became steadily narrower. This was to be a distinctive feature of postwar British politics.

But, in general, internal policy was of little interest to Churchill, as before. In this area his ministers operated with a considerable degree of independence. Churchill concentrated on foreign policy and, of course, on relations with America.

In January 1952, Churchill set off for the USA to meet the American President. He arrived in style, just as he had

during his wartime visits, accompanied by a large entourage of advisers and assistants. The discussions inluded a number of fairly important issues. Britain was in difficult straits. The arms race was beginning to tell on her economy, and Churchill wanted American aid to carry out the rearmament programme. It was arranged that the USA would provide Britain with steel in exchange for non-ferrous metals. Previously, in 1948, the Labour Government had consented to the creation of American military bases in the British Isles. Now Churchill agreed with the Americans that in the event of war the use of these bases would be subject to agreement between the two Governments. The participants in the talks confirmed their readiness to hold consultations on all major issues of war and peace. Truman and Churchill pledged their support to the European Defence Community, which was then being set up, and to the involvement of Western Germany in military blocs of which Britain and the USA were members. Churchill tried to persuade the Americans that the NATO armies should be equipped with a new British rifle, which the British regarded as the best in the world. However, the Americans would not accept this.

Churchill was given the chance to speak to the US Congress, and in his speech he pledged Britain's full support for the American war in Korea and the aggressive policies that the USA was pursuing towards China. His address to Congress sharply differed from the speeches he made in Britain. It was more outspoken and pro-American. Churchill had moved significantly away from the reserved position held by Attlee's Government over the spread of American aggression in the Far East.

Labour MPs made this the basis of an attack on Churchill in the Commons when he returned from the USA. The British public were rather worried by the belligerent declarations made by Churchill in America. Attlee quoted a large number of American newspaper comments on Churchill's speech to Congress and emphasised that the Prime Minister said different things in his speeches in America and in Britain on the same issue. However, the debates sparked off in the House came to nothing, and Churchill emerged unscathed.

In February 1952, King George VI died at the age of 56. His elder daughter was proclaimed Queen Elizabeth II. A royalist by nature, Churchill thoroughly enjoyed immersing himself in the preparations for the late King's funeral and the

coronation of the new Queen. "Cynics in the House of Commons," writes Emrys Hughes, "remarked that he enjoyed every minute of the long-drawn-out funeral ceremonies, which lasted a week." During this week Churchill was able to deliver a whole cascade of speeches, all in the grandiloquent style he loved so much.

Characteristically, while praising George VI, Churchill did not let slip a single opportunity for self-glorification. As he paid his final tribute to the late King, he suggested that the British nation had only been able to surmount all the trials and tribulations of the war honourably because Winston Churchill had stood at the helm.

Elizabeth II's coronation passed off without any complications. The only point of dicord between the Queen and the Government was on the question of what she was to be called. Her husband was the grandson of the Greek King and the nephew of Lord Mountbatten, a prominent military leader in the Second World War. Members of the Royal Family thought that, in acceding to the throne, Elizabeth should keep her husband's surname, Mountbatten, which she would pass on to her children. The Government did not agree with this. The Queen had to submit to Churchill's demands and officially announce her change of name, which would be taken by her children too. She took the surname Windsor, and thereby continued the Windsor dynasty. Elizabeth's husband kept his original surname. In 1953 the young Queen decorated Churchill with the country's highest award, the Order of the Garter. The order conferred a knighthood on him.

His last years of power were a pale period in Churchill's political career. They were years which showed most clearly his incapacity to determine the tendencies of world development. His strategic concept, based on the hope of eliminating the socialist system and restoring the worldwide unity of capitalism, had by this time collapsed, and Churchill himself was forced to recognise the fact and draw the corresponding conclusions.

In 1957 Churchill wrote that "a new undreamed-of balance or power was created, a balance based on the ownership of the means of mutual extermination". He was referring to the Soviet Union's massive achievements in science and technology. The Soveit Union made first the atomic bomb and then the hydrogen bomb, more quickly than Churchill had predicted, and far sooner than Britain had

prepared her own nuclear weapons. Consequently, Churchill's ambition to put paid to the Soviet Union before it possessed nuclear weapons was totally confounded.

The Soviet Union restored its war-torn economy and made significant economic, political and cultural progress. All this was achieved by the peoples of the Soviet Union not only without any foreign aid, but also under the threat of nuclear war, which the imperialist Powers were prepared to start at any moment. This achievement of the Soviet people stands on a par with their achievement in the Second World War.

With the support of the Soviet Union, a number of European and Asian nations accomplished socialist revolutions and joined in the socialist community. This was a mighty blow to capitalism in general and to British capitlaism in particular. Of equally shattering effect were the national liberation revolutions in colonies and dependent countires. Churchill, who had once proudly declared that he did not intend to preside over the disintegration of the British Empire, was to witness the swift collapse of the Empire as one part of it after another embarked on an independent political development after centuries of British imperialist oppression.

Churchill, like the rest of his class, was powerless to prevent this process, which determined the historical course followed by mankind after the Second World War. The British, American and several other imperialist governments formed a system of military-political blocs in accordance with the plan set out in Churchill's Fulton speech. However, when they came face to face with the political and military power of the socialist camp and other peace-loving forces, these blocs proved unable to attain the goals marked out by Churchill in Fulton. In Britain herself, as in other imperialist countires, a strong popular movement emerged, calling for peace and opposing Churchill's militaristic policies. The movement buttressed the peace-loving foreign policies of the socialist countries, and formed a serious obstacle to the Anglo-American promotion of a third world war. The arms race policy pursued by the Labour Government with Churchill's blessing proved untenable. It did not strengthen Britain's security, and severely weakened the economy. "The policy of rearming the Western world for a crusade against Communism," remarked Emrys Hughes, "had brought

Britain near bankruptcy without in any way adding to the security of Britain, which had become the atom-bomb base of America in Europe, exposed in the event of war to devastating and destructive counterattack."

During his term as Prime Minister, Churchill was thus obliged to admit the total failure of his Fulton plans. He recognised that not only was capitalism unable to eliminate socialism by force, but, if such a policy were put into effect, Britain, in the front line of the nuclear force, would be the first to be destroyed.

Churchill had great respect for the leading British authority on military strategy, Captain Liddell Hart. In a series of articles analysing Britain's strategic position in the event of nuclear war, Liddell Hart came to the melancholy conclusion that Britain would be the first victim and probably with tragic consequences. Churchill was forced to conclude that there could be no more talk about the "unconditional surrender of the Soveit Union", and that in the event of war both sides would be in a position to "tear the human race, including themselves, into bits".

Churchill officially expressed these thoughts in a speech delivered in the spring of 1953. This was just six or seven years since he had thought it possible to force the will of Western imperialism on the Soviet Union. Churchill's revelations, in 1957, of his views at the beginning of the fifties sound really outrageous: "It even occurred to me that an announced but peaceful aerial demonstration over the main Soviet cities, coupled with the outlining to the Soviet leaders of some of our newest inventions would produce in them a more friendly and sober attitude." Such a demonstration would, in the event, have been nothing less than the beginning of war, for there is no doubt that the Soviet Government would have taken measures to clear its skies of enemy planes.

However, Churchill soon decided that acts of blackmail and provocation towards the USSR were no longer possible. "The nuclear age," he wrote, "transformed the relations between the Great Powers.... But Russian production of these weapons and the remarkable strides of their air force nave long since removed the point of this idea." The world situation radically changed in those years, and Churchill was not alone in the capitalist countries in his search for a new strategy and a new policy. It became evident that a new

balance of power had emerged, and that the Fulton illusions had to be abandoned. But what was to take their place?

It was while Churchill was tormented by this problem that he received the news of Stalin's death. Churchill and Stalin had corresponded quite frequently during the war. In the final period of the war and during the 1945 Parliamentary elections, Churchill liked to claim that Stalin was his best friend. Of course, this was just a rhetorical and tactical device designed to win over those people who sympathised with the Soviet Union. He really felt the most profound hostility towards Stalin.

Churchill did not like people whom he was unable to charm with his assumed amiablilty and to hoodwink, people who saw through his double game. He played this game frequently and with many people, especially during the Second World War. He tried it on with Roosevelt, with De Gaulle and with Stalin. Stalin not only saw through Churchill's fairly obvious attempts to trick the Soviet Government (e.g. the question of the second front, convoys to the northern ports of the USSR, and many other instances), but also drew Churchill's attention to them on several occasions and in no uncertain manner, as can be seen in the correspondence between the two statesmen. According to his memoirs, Churchill was infuriated by such "discourtesy" and "ingratitude".

During the Yalta Conference a dinner was held at which Churchill proposed a toast "on a serious topic", as he put it. "My hope," said Churchill, "is in the illustrious President of the United States and in Marshal Stalin, in whom we shall find the champions of peace, who after smiting the foe will lead us [very non-Churchillian modesty—*V.T.*] to carry on the task against poverty, confusion, chaos, and oppression." Churchill said that he regarded Marshal Stalin's life "as most precious to the hopes and hearts of all of us" and that he walked through this world "with greater courage and hope when I find myself in a relation of friendship and intimacy with this great man, whose fame has gone out not only over all Russia, but the world".

These words were very far from Churchill's true feelings. Stalin probably resolved to show Churchill that he did not believe in the ardent love of the British Prime Minister. He answered with a toast: "I want to drink to our alliance...."

"In an alliance the allies should not deceive each other.

Perhaps it is naïve? Experienced diplomatists may say, 'Why should I not deceive my ally?' But I as a naïve man think it best not to deceive my ally even if he is a fool. Possibly our alliance is so firm just because we do not deceive each other; or is it because it is not so easy to deceive each other? I propose a toast to the firmness of our Three-Power Alliance. May it be strong and stable; may we be as frank as possible."

Churchill understood that this was said in earnest, and many years later wrote in his memoirs: "I have never suspected that he could be so expansive."

When Churchill learnt of Stalin's illness in March 1953, he displayed a keen interest in the matter. He contacted the Soviet Embassy in London and asked to be informed regularly of the state of Stalin's health. But when Stalin died, "Churchill even allowed the death of Stalin to pass without making any public reference to the event," writes Emrys Hughes. "This was a most unusual thing for him."

Churchill never really knew the Soviet Union, although he conducted a stubborn campaign against it for decades. Now, in 1953, his poor understanding of Soviet conditions led him to overestimate the significance of Stalin's death for Soviet foreign policy. He assumed that it would now be completely revised.

In the spring of 1953, Churchill had the idea of organising a summit conference between representatives of the USSR, Britain, the USA and France. He believed that it might be possible to exert pressure on the Soviet Government at such a conference, and extract some important concessions in favour of the imperialist Powers. Even if they did not manage this, the conference would still provide good opportunities for reconnaissance. Across the conference table it would be possible to gauge the strength and confidence of the new Soviet leadership, and to determine the chances of subsequently making it more amenable to the interests of the capitalist world. As for the discussions with the Soviet Government, which British statesmen talked about from time to time after the Second World War, Palme Dutt wrote that such negotiations "become, not a search for agreement, but a test of relative strength". This was certainly true of Churchill's proposal in 1953. He wanted to see whether the Soviets had developed "a new attitude".

Churchill wanted the conference to remind the British

nation of the meetings between the Big Three during the Second World War, in which he participated and which brought him recognition. Now, with himself the only surviving member of the Big Three, Churchill would have been assured of the limelight at such a conference.

Another thing was important to him too: having repeatedly promised that, when he came to power, he would take steps to organise a summit meeting with Soviet representatives, he wanted to give at least the appearance of fulfilling his obligations to the public. *The Daily Telgraph* said that Churchill "felt deeply that British people would not forgive the missing of any chance, however faint, of a real peace".

In this respect, Churchill had certain differences with the US leaders. The British Premier was prepared to meet Soviet representatives around the conference table, but the US Government was not interested in such a meeting: it could only interfere with American plans. At that time the reactionary camp had gained prominence in America, and the extreme reactionary, Senator Joseph McCarthy, had come to the fore in American politics. The American Government was engaged in a series of aggressive military actions in the Far East.

The British Government observed these highly perilous activities with a certain amount of anxiety. Churchill and many other British politicians realised that American policy in the Far East could provoke a third world war. This meant that Britain, as America's most advanced atomic base, would be the first to go up in nuclear flames. Even if things went no furhter than a big war confined to Asia and the Far East, its consequences could still only be negative for Britain. If the peoples of Asia emerged victorious, America's defeat would be just as much Britain's defeat. Her colonial interests would be completely destroyed. If, on the other hand, America won, the subsequent balance of power in the Far East would be such that Britain would have to abandon her colonial interests in that case too. They would inevitably be seized by American imperialism.

But what were Chuchill's feelings towards the Soviet Union in the twilight of his political career? Perhaps he had revised his attitude towards the socialist country and recognised that the campaign he had mounted against it for so many years was in vain? Nothing of the sort had taken place. In 1953 he announced: "The day will come when it will be

recognized without doubt ... throughout the civilized world that the strangling of Bolshevism at birth would have been an untold blessing to the human race."

While making this statement, he at the same time expressed the desirability of a summit meeting with the Soviet leaders. One can only conlude that he had no serious intention to reach an agreement with the USSR on controversial international issues.

And yet in 1953-54, to the surprise of many observers in both East and West, Churchill suddenly announced: "I desire to come to a peaceful arrangement for coexistence with Russia." On his visit to America in June 1954 he declared: "I am of the opinion that we ought to have a really good try for peaceful coexistence."

These pronouncements by Churchill were a recognition of the complete collapse of his Fulton policy. At Fulton he had called for a preventive war against the Soviet Union, which he said represented a grave danger to humanity. Now he was calling for peaceful coexistence with the same state. The public saw this as indicating that the British Prime Minister's previous allegations concerning the policies of the Soviet Union fell short of the truth, to put it mildly. What exactly was it that had caused this complete volte-face?

These uncharacteristic pronouncements by Churchill can be explained by the shift in the balance of power in the world. Discussing the reasons behind the "great warrior's" metamorphosis into "peacemaker", the American historian D.F. Fleming wrote: "The Cold War had ended in a stalemate which made it impossible to go on practising atomic diplomacy and conducting the Cold War.... First our atomic monopoly had gone, then our dicisive superiority, and finally our own home-land could no longer be defended."

It would be totally wrong to maintain that Churchill, at the end of his political career, had been transformed from socialism's Enemy No. 1 into an advocate for peaceful coexistence with it. Peaceful coexistence, in Churchill's view, was just a version of the imperialist policy of negotiating from strength, a continuation of the struggle to eliminate socialism and restore capitalism. Lewis Broad, the author of one of the most naive biographies of Churchill, but the most popular one in the bourgeois world, maintains that "the phrase 'peaceful coexistence' was one that had been coined by Eden and it found acceptance in Washington, the

President himself adopting it". It is unclear whether Broad really does not know, or is only pretending not to know, that the conception (and phrase) "peaceful coexistence" was first set forth by Lenin, and not Eden. What is important in his assertion is not this, however, but the evidence it provides that peaceful coexistence as interpreted by Churchill and Eden was fully acceptable to American imperialist circles during the cold war.

Careful analysis of Churchill's speeches reveals how he interpreted the concept of peaceful coexistence. At a luncheon given by the National Press Club of the USA, Churchill stated that his proposal for peaceful coexistence would be likely "to bring about a modification of the rigid Russian system", and that these changes could be brought about by "contacts between the Russian people and the Western world—cultural contacts and trade contacts". In other words, Churchill's idea of peaceful coexistence was a new plan for changing the social and economic system in the Soviet Union without having recourse to military methods, since such methods might prove disastrous to capitalism itself.

On his return to Britain from the USA, Churchill said of his discussions with the American leaders: "I think we convinced them that we have changed none of our ultimate joint objectives and that there is, at any rate, some wisdom in the means by which we are proposing to reach them." In this way he officially confirmed that his talk of peaceful coexistence did not imply a refusal to fight socialism in order to restore capitalism.

This did not, of course, mean that the capitalist world was to struggle against the USSR and the other socialist countries, using only political, economic and ideological means. Positions of strength and military superiority retained an important place in Churchill's plans for achieving his ends in relations with the socialist world. Summing up Churchill's career, *The Daily Telegraph* stated in January 1965 that "he was resolute to play his part in testing the chances of 'peaceful co-existence' between the Free and the Communist worlds". The newspaper goes on to say that "the whole character of the foreign policy of his third Administration was inspired by the idea of negotiating only from strength". Making the inevitable inference, the paper equates Churchill's conception of peaceful coexistence with his policy of

negotiating from strength. Lewis Broad admits: "He devoted the labours of his last weeks in office to the dual purposes of his policy: peace through strength." To support this, Broad describes how Churchill, in defiance of British public opinion, took measures to develop a British hydrogen bomb. The hydrogen bomb, he said, "would certainly increase the deterrent in Soviet Russia by putting her enormous spaces and scattered population on a basis of equality, or near-equality with our small, densely populated island and with western Europe".

At the same time Churchill stressed that over a period of many years, ever since the final months of the Second World War, he had nourished the idea of using Germany against the USSR. At the end of 1954 he astounded the nation by revealing that on the eve of Germany's capitulation he had ordered Field Marshal Montgomery to collect the German weapons so as to be able to redistribute them to the Germans in the event of war aginst the USSR. Churchill's revelation was greeted with indignation in Britain. It showed that the British Government had been dishonourable in its relations with the USSR at the end of the war, and, furthermore, that Churchill's Government in 1954 was profoundly hostile towards the USSR. Since he thought it possible to boast of such services in public, this meant that his assurances about seeking a peaceful settlement of controversial questions were entirely worthless. *The Times* and other papers censured the Prime Minister's indiscretion. "But why, it was asked," writes Broad, "should he have recalled such an episode from the past at a moment when he was seeking to reach an accommodation with Russia's new leaders? " People close to Churchill said that Winston made a great error in saying this. From Moran's account one can conclude that he himself attributes the episode to an old man's garrulousness.

The real explanation is not hard to find: all Churchill's talk of coexistence was sheer hypocrisy, and his hostility towards the USSR kept breaking through in these anti-Soviet statements. It should be borne in mind that it was these statements which were in keeping with the European policy of Churchill's Government. Helped by his advisers, Churchill gauged the risk that Britain would run by developing nuclear weapons and participating in the aggressive military blocs whose policies threatened to cause a new world war. This was soon to be understood only too well by large numbers of

people in Britain.

When an armistice was signed in Korea in June 1953, the American Government tried to turn the colonial war being waged by France in Indo-China into a general offensive against the peoples of South-East Asia fighting for national liberation. The American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, as inveterate an anti-communist as Churchill himself, came out in support of the idea of "joint action" in Indo-China, planning to organise the same sort of intervention against the peoples of Indo-China as the USA had organised against the Korean people. In 1954 America's Far Eastern policy brought mankind to the brink of a new world war. The British leaders fully understood this and were seriously alarmed.

Dulles' idea was received sceptically in France, and did not meet with approval in Britain either. He promptly came to London, but was unable to convince Churchill of the advisability of an extensive military campaign in Asia. The British Government insisted on discussing the Indo-China question at a conference of the countries concerned in Geneva.

A conference was held. The Soviet Union, China, France and a number of other countries urged a peaceful decision of the Indo-China question. Britain sided with them. The Americans considered that they had been betrayed by the British.

There were several reasons why Churchill's Government adopted a sensible position in Geneva. Above all, it feared that America's rash policies in the Far East would lead to a third world war, with tragic consequences for Britain. Emrys Hughes explains Eden's position in Geneva as follows: "A dread fear of the hydrogen bomb hung over the British leaders. It was known that Russia had the latest and most devastating hydrogen bomb. Military experts estimated that eight well-placed bombs of this sort would utterly destroy Britain, and it was conceded that Russia must have more than eight of these by the summer of 1954.... Russian technological advances in eight years had completely changed the situation, and Churchill had been compelled to modify his policy accordingly."

Britain's position in Geneva was also determined by the fact that, as mentioned above, any expansion of the war in the Far East would have bitter consequences for Britain.

Many of the member-countries of the British Commonwealth wanted an end to the war in Indo-China, and Churchill's Government could not afford to ignore their feelings. Nor could it ignore the demands of the British people, who unanimously opposed the country's involvement in any American military escapades.

The British Government's actions in Geneva were designed to remove the immediate threat of a large scale war. However, they did not mean that Churchill's Government had made a general resolution to adopt a sensible stand towards the peoples of the Far East. In September 1954 the British Government became a founding member of SEATO, the imperialist states' aggressive military bloc for the Far East. The USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on this event, saying: "It is interesting to note that certain of the participants of the Manila Conference were, only recently, professing to understand the national needs of the peoples of Asia.... But one may reasonably ask how such declarations are to be reconciled with the participation of Britain and France in an aggressive military bloc directed against the countries of Asia?"

The Churchill Government's European policy did not follow the zigzag course of its Asian policy. Here everything was black-and-white. While a member of the Opposition, Churchill had been an outspoken advocate of the inclusion of Germany in military blocs formed by the imperialist Powers against the USSR. Much in this direction had been achieved by the Attlee-Bevin Government, which had done all the ground-work. However, it fell to Churchill to put into action the plans he had first formulated in his Zurich speech in September 1946.

Churchill was wont to exaggerate somewhat the role of Europe in world affairs and to underestimate the role of the other continents, which had grown immensely in the last few decades. This is not surprising. Eurocentrism was built into his education. "It is in Europe," he said, "that the world course will be decided."

Churchill devoted his last years in office to attempts to incorporate West Germany, the most reactionary and aggressive Power in Western Europe, into the existing military-political aggressive blocs. Thanks to the efforts of the Governments of Britain, the USA and France, the same political factions which had prepared two world wars and

were now adamant in their refusal to accept the outcome of the latest of these came to power in West Germany. The incorporation of West Germany into the imperialist blocs meant a definitive break with the policy of alliance with the USSR, which the British Government had followed during the Second World War, and, consequently, the annulment of the 1942 Anglo-Soviet alliance. This was the result of the policy pursued by Churchill's Government between 1952 and 1955.

In May 1952, Britain and a number of other states concluded two agreements with Adenauer's Government, providing for the creation of West German armed forces. It was planned that these forces would be the nucleus of a "European army". Churchill's dream of arming West Germany against the USSR seemed to be near realisation.

However the peoples of Europe, including the British nation, realised that this amounted to giving arms to the forces which had recently inflicted such evil and pain on Europe. They were categorically opposed to Churchill's schemes. Movements were formed in a number of countries, including Britain, protesting against the remilitarisation of West Germany.

The French were naturally apprehensive about the formation of a "European army". As early as 1946, in his Zurich speech, Churchill had urged a reconciliation between Germany and France, since he knew that it would be impossible to rearm Germany without France's consent. He also knew that France had telling reasons for fearing the consequences of the rearmament of Germany. As he wrote later, "Within the space of seventy years the French had been invaded three times from across the Rhine. It was hard to forget Sedan, the blood-bath of Verdun, the collapse in 1940, the long grinding occupation of the Second World War.... In Britain I was conscious of a wide hostility to giving weapons even under the strictest safeguards, to the new German Republic. But it was unlikely that a Soviet invasion of Western Europe could ever be repulsed without the help of the Germans."

Churchill once said to Moran: "Truth is so precious, it should be accompanied by an escort of lies." In the passage quoted above this escort is very substantial. Instead of saying that it would be impossible to fight the Soviet Union without the support of an aggressive West Germany, he declares the

need for German participation in repelling a fictitious piece of Soviet aggression which he had invented himself.

Churchill was annoyed by France's unwillingness to ratify the agreements providing for the remilitarisation of West Germany. He embarked on a lively campaign to pressure France into agreeing to the inclusion of West German military units in a "European army". Churchill bullied the French, saying that, even if they refused to ratify the 1952 Bonn and Paris agreements, German armed forces would still be created within the framework of the Atlantic Union. Churchill was never popular in France, particularly after the Second World War. It is not therefore surprising that his threats caused general indignation there. Philippe Barres, a right-wing deputy of the French National Assembly, declared: "Sir Winston Churchill has not been charged with the administration of France.... It is up to us ourselves to decide whether we wish to commit suicide." In August 1954 the French National Assembly rejected the agreement to create a European Defence Community, the child of Churchill's Zurich speech, as *The Daily Telegraph* called it.

In response, the British Government campaigned vigorously for a new agreement on the remilitarisation of West Germany. A conference was held in London, and a second in Paris, where, on 23 October 1954, nine countries, including Britain, signed new agreements providing for the remilitarisation of West Germany. West Germany was included in the Western-European Alliance and in NATO. It order to remove the threat of the consequences of this development to France, Churchill's Government agreed to maintain British military units on German territory, to guarantee the good behaviour of the rearmed Germans. France was thus assured that there were no grounds for fearing the resurging military might of West Germany.

Despite these guarantees, there were fears that the French National Assembly would submit to popular pressure and reject the new agreements too. Churchill redoubled his efforts to persuade France to ratify the documents. Once again he threatened the French that an alliance between Britain, the USA and West Germany would be concluded in any case, with or without France's participation. If France joined the alliance, it would be directed exclusively against the USSR and the other socialist countries; if not, it would also be aimed against France. On 10 January 1955, Churchill

wrote a letter to the French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France, in which he said of France: "I should feel the utmost sorrow to see her isolated and losing her influence with the rest of the free world. I hope that it will fall to you to save your country from this evil turn of fortune." In the end, the French National Assembly bowed to the pressure from the right-wing forces of Britain, the USA and France herself and ratified the agreements for the remilitarisation of West Germany.

Britain's participation in these agreements meant that the British Government, together with the Governments of the USA, France and certain other countries were taking an official, united stand against the Soviet Union, for, on Churchill's own admission, the rearmament of West Germany was directed against the USSR. By the same token, Churchill's Government was officially declaring to the world that it was ignoring the treaty of alliance between Britain and the USSR, and was demonstrating its willingness to sunder the alliance they had formed during the Second World War. It was Churchill's intention, after an alliance with West Germany would be officially formed, to intimidate the Soviet Union and make it submit to British and American demands. That was why he regarded the ratification of the agreements setting up the alliance as a preliminary condition for a summit meeting with Soviet representatives. "I and my colleagues," he wrote to Mendès-France on 10 January 1955, "are wholeheartedly resolved that there shall be no meeting or invitation in any circumstances that we can foresee between the four powers ... until the London-Paris agreements have been ratified by all signatories. In this we are in the closest accord with the United States."

On several occasions the Soviet Government warned the British Government that, if London entered into an alliance with the West German revanchists against the Soviet Union, it would thereby destroy the Anglo-Soviet treaty of alliance. Churchill's Government was consciously moving towards a rejection of the 1942 Agreement. By this time the Agreement was only useful to the Government as a means to conceal its policy of hostility to the USSR from the British people. Yet Churchill regarded the agreement as something of a burden, since it found disfavour with the West German revanchists, some of its articles providing for joint action by Britain and the USSR to avert new German aggression.

The British Government did not heed the warnings of the Soviet Government and by its actions in fact abrogated the 1942 Agreement. The Soviet Union had no other course but to bring the legal situation into accordance with the actual state of affairs. On 7 May 1955 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet passed a decree annulling the Anglo-Soviet treaty.

The decision was taken a month after Churchill's retirement as Prime Minister, but the responsibility for breaking off the agreement was entirely Churchill's since he had been preparing this step for several years. Thus he concluded his political career with a remarkable act: the formation of an alliance with West German imperialism against the USSR and, simultaneously, the sundering of the alliance between Britain and the USSR.

Of course, it was not Churchill's fault that world history after the Second World War did not develop according to his Fulton plan. He had nothing to do with it. Irreversible processes were at work in the world. However, as a statesman, Churchill can be blamed for his failure to shape British policies in accordance with the prevalent tendencies of world development. The collapse of the cold war, which Churchill had so energetically promoted, seriously undermined his authority. Despite all his endeavours to appear to the public as a peacemaker, British and world opinion regarded him, after Fulton, as an inveterate warmonger.

The unsoundness of Churchill's foreign policy was clear by the mid-fifties. It was becoming more obvious every day that the Government needed a new leader, with new ideas, more flexible and less discredited in the eyes of the nation.

Moreover, Churchill was by now a very old man. The burden of a prime minister's responsibilities had become too great for him. In 1952, Dr. Moran had remarked that the Prime Minister's "old appetite for work has gone; everything has become an effort". In June 1953 Churchill had a stroke, which paralysed the left side of his body. At the age of 78 this was extremely serious. The nation was not informed of the extent of Churchill's affliction, and knew only that the Prime Minister was ill and had been prescribed a complete rest for a lengthy period of time. All those close to Churchill were convinced, when they saw his condition, that he would be unable to return to politics. But Churchill had immense reserves of vitality. He recovered from his illness, regained the

use of the left side of his body, and by October was appearing at the annual Conservative Party Conference. However, the years had taken their toll, and his illness had not passed entirely without trace.

In November 1954, Winston Churchill's 80th birthday was an occasion for extravagant celebrations. Speeches were delivered in which he was lauded as the greatest British statesman and one of the most outstanding political leaders. The two Houses of Parliament, the diplomatic corps and foreign dignitaries all took part in the celebrations.

Parliament presented Churchill with his portrait by one of Britain's leading artists, Graham Sutherland. The portrait aroused great controversy about its artistic value. Some held that in it Churchill resembled neither a noble warrior nor an elder statesman. One MP said of it: "It is the truth; it is the picture of a depressed-looking old man thinking of the atom-bomb."

During 1953 and 1954 the Conservative leaders started to talk more and more frequently of Churchill's resignation and replacement as head of the Government and leader of the Conservative Party. There was no dispute about his replacement. Long before, in 1940, when Churchill was elected leader of the Conservative Party, some of the Conservatives proposed Anthony Eden as his deputy. It was hoped to put Churchill, at least to some extent, under the control of a more reliable person. However, it was thought ill-advised to introduce this innovation. In 1942, before his American visit, Churchill recommended to the King that Eden should be made Prime Minister in the event of his death.

When Churchill fell ill in 1953, Eden's hour seemed to have come at last. But it so happened that he too was then gravely ill after a serious operation. Churchill's son Randolph wrote that if Eden had been in England at that time, and in good health, his father would have been forced to resign and Eden would have succeeded him as Prime Minister. Conservative leaders agreed that it would be unwise to hurry Churchill into retirement before Eden had recovered. According to Randolph, they were influenced in this decision by their sympathy for Eden, who had waited so long for an opportunity to move into Number Ten.

There was probably more to it than this. At that time there was no one amongst the leading members of the Conservative Party who was a match for Eden. There were

even plans to set up an interim government, which would administer the country until Eden's recovery. The final solution was much simpler. Winston Churchill recovered and returned to his duties as head of the Government.

Churchill knew that the consensus of opinion in the Conservative Party increasingly favoured his resignation. Nor was it any secret to him that his "crown prince" had grown tired of waiting. Occasionally Churchill would taunt Eden, telling him that the last time Gladstone had come to office he was over 80. Churchill's biographers say that he finally decided to resign in 1955.

Churchill's retirement was prepared quietly and gradually. He departed from office with every possible honour. On 4 April 1955, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visited the Prime Minister in his residence at 10, Downing Street, where a dinner was held in her honour. The dinner was attended by Cabinet ministers, prominent members of the Labour Party, many wartime military leaders and Churchill's closest associates. The Queen's presence at the dinner was a mark of special honour to the retiring Prime Minister.

In September 1973, in her address at the unveiling of a statue of Churchill near the Houses of Parliament, the Queen said that in 1955 she had offered the aged Prime Minister a Dukedom, a distinction which had not been proposed to anyone for nearly a century. But Churchill declined the honour, preferring to keep his own name and the right to remain in the House of Commons.

On 5 April all the formalities were completed. Stooping heavily and leaning on a stick, the aged Prime Minister alighted from a car outside Buckingham Palace. He presented the Queen with his resignation as Prime Minister. The following day, Anthony Eden was received in the palace, and charged with the formation of a new government.

Churchill gave a tea-party for the staff at 10, Downing Street and departed from the house for ever. The crowd assembled at the entrance watched him get into a car, with the inevitable cigar in his mouth and accompanied by his poodle Rufus. He gave them the famous two-finger V-sign, with which he had so often hailed his fellow-countrymen during his wartime speeches.

This time, Churchill's resignation was final. His long political career, with its many vicissitudes, had come to an end. Nominally, he remained a Member of Parliament, but, to all intents and purposes, he had left politics for good.

Chapter 13
The Final Years

Churchill was always in a hurry throughout his political career. This was most noticeable in the first decade of the century, but even in his mature years he continued to display constant impatience, particularly in the years preceding his third term of office as Prime Minister.

When Churchill was asked why he always hurried and why he was impatient to achieve everything immediately, he would answer that he did not count on living longer than his father, and so he had no choice but to hurry if he was to equal and then surpass Randolph's achievements. As it turned out, however, Winston lived exactly twice as long as his father.

Leaving politics in 1955, Churchill spent the last ten years of his life in retirement, living at Chartwell, and also in his quiet London house at 28, Hyde Park Gate. Occasionally he would take a Mediterranean cruise as a guest of the Greek millionaire Aristotle Onassis on his yacht *Christina*. He was fond of visiting the French Riviera.

At first, both journalists and Chirchill's friends wondered what he would do once he ceased to take an active part in politics. Some thought he would become one of those elder statesmen who from time to time addressed the nation on important political problems and reproached the government in office. Others thought that he would disappear into

complete solitude, severing all ties with the political world, and losing interest in politics in general.

Both were wrong. Churchill decided to remain an MP until the end of his life. He moved from the Treasury Bench, occupied by members of the Government, to a seat in a corner, behind the aisle between the benches. Churchill seldom appeared in Parliamant and, when he did, he sat in his corner seat in silence. Passions raged about him, but he appeared not to notice what was going on. Occasionally the MPs would look in the direction of the venerable statesman, waiting for him to pronounce on the issue in hand, but he remained silent, only participating in the controversy by voting.

Once, during the Suez crisis which the Eden Government sparked off at the end of 1956, when they went to war against Egypt, Churchill had some influence on the course of events. Anthony Eden, who for so long had played second fiddle, and only become Prime Minister in the spring of 1955, had to leave office for good in January 1957. The Conservatives sacrificed Eden, making him the scapegoat for the collapse of their Suez venture. Another person close to Churchill succeeded Eden: Harold Macmillan. Public opinion favoured the transfer of the premiership to R.A. Butler, the minister who had adopted the most reasonable course with regard to Egypt, but, during a visit to Buckingham Palace, Winston Churchill advised the Queen to entrust the formation of a government to Macmillan, who had been just as much in favour of intervention against Egypt as Eden. Other leaders gave the Queen the same advice, and the job went to Macmillan.

When he retired, Churchill said that he would have an interesting and enjoyable pastime: writing. But this is not what happened. The psychological blow of retirement was such that he could no longer take up the pen. He lacked both the physical and the intellectual energy for this. The period 1956-1958 saw the publication of his four-volume *History of the English-Speaking Peoples.* Churchill told Moran that these volumes had been written very swiftly—in a year and three months—just before the Second World War. "I worked at them every night," said Churchill, "till two in the morning, though at the time I was fighting for rearmament. Of course I had a team to help, but I wrote every word myself." The war, and then work on more interesting and important books on

the Second World War delayed publication of the history. Churchill told Moran that the book needed some polishing, but that he was not feeling up to the task, and all four volumes were published, by and large, in their original state.

The conservative press naturally praised the *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. This praise can largely be explained politically, as an attempt to use the publication of the work to propagate the Anglo-American alliance.

Churchill had delivered a four-volume monologue in favour of an alliance between Britain and America, which, in his opinion, would guarantee the survival of the capitalist world and the establishment of Anglo-American world domination. The alliance idea pervades the entire work and is given a historical justification.

The first volume is entitled *The Birth of Britain*. The author's account starts with the remote past and concludes with the beginning of the Tudor era. The second volume, *The New World*, traces English history from 1485 to 1688. The third volume, *The Age of Revolution*, is devoted to the history of Britain and the USA from the end of the 17th century to 1815. The fourth and last volume, *The Great Democracies*, brings the account of British and American history up to 1901.

Readers must have seen that the author was taking up a markedly chauvinistic position. He depicts the special responsibility supposedly borne by the Anglo-Saxon peoples (whose job it was to point the way to a better future for the rest of the world) in such a way that the reader was bound to be persuaded of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. Churchill had done this to some extent in all his writings and in many speeches too, but nowhere was the conviction so strongly voiced as in the *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*.

Despite the favourable reviews in the press, historians were critical of Churchill's last work. Not just because, as certain critics complained, it was a history of royalty, the aristocracy and battles—Churchill always wrote history from that point of view—but because it contained no new facts or documents. Whereas an abundance of fresh factual material had been a distinguishing feature of Churchill's previous studies, this book's only sources were general histories of Britain published long before. Historians pointed out that the author had failed to take into account the historical literature

written over the previous three or four decades at least on the problems he discussed.

To the end of his days Churchill had a weakness for all kinds of awards and other marks of attention. He continued to be given honorary citizenship by one town after another. President De Gaulle of France decorated him with the Cross of Liberation. In November 1958, after a break of 14 years, Churchill met De Gaulle on this occasion, and delivered an emotional speech describing the great friendship he felt for France. In April 1963 the US Congress passed a special resolution, granting Winston Churchill honorary American citizenship. A proclamation to this effect was signed by President Kennedy.

In Kennedy's eyes, Churchill was a Titan. In his youth the future American president had pored over his works, especially his *Life of Marlborough*. The young Kennedy found that no one else wrote on political themes as well as the English politician he so revered. When working on his own language, Kennedy tried to imitate Churchill's exalted rhetoric.

The well-known American journalist Hugh Sidey once remarked: "Kennedy sometimes wondered how much of Winston Churchill's stature was built on the use of words. Often he read the Churchill memos just to savor their craftsmanship." Kennedy's notebooks abounded in extracts from Churchill. He loved to repeat Churchill's words: "The whole history of the world is summed up in the fact that, when nations are strong, they are not always just, and when they wish to be just, they are often no longer strong."

For many years Kennedy dreamed of meeting Churchill. The opportunity arrived in the late fifties: the Kennedies were on holiday in Cannes, where Churchill was also staying. Kennedy tremulously shook the hand of the aged politician. In his senility Churchill mistook him for someone else, and when the confusion had eventually been cleared up, according to Kennedy's biographer Arthur M. Schlesinger "the conversation was hard going. He had met his hero too late. But Churchill retained his greatest admiration." The President adopted Churchill's habit of invariably having an hour's sleep during the afternoon, in pyjamas in bed, and kept to it religiously, hoping to acquire Churchill's energy.

During his retirement Churchill would make occasional trips to Monte Carlo, where he liked to play roulette.In April

1975 the *Time* magazine reported that in Monte Carlo "they still remember Winston Churchill, who lived at the Hôtel de Paris in retirement. Every night he would hobble to the roulette tables and sit with a large glass of 1918 Napoleon brandy chomping on an unlit cigar and playing the numbers 18 and 22 over and over again. 'Monsieur had uncanny luck,' a former employee recalls."

At the age of 87, on a visit to Monte Carlo, Churchill fell and broke his hip. He was taken to England in an RAF plane and spent a long time in hospital, making a full recovery from his injury. Churchill's strength seemed to be inexhaustible, but it too was nearing the end.

In 1964 Churchill decided not to stand for re-election to Parliament. This brought to a close a Parliamentary career that had lasted, with one short interruption, for 65 years. The Commons said a warm farewell to him. Tributes to the great services that the 89-year-old Conservative leader had rendered to British politics came pouring in from representatives of the different parties. Churchill's friends and doctors believed that the extra excitement that this caused would have harmful consequences for him; for this reason he was not present when the House of Commons passed a special resolution paying tribute to his services to Parliamentary government in Britain. But the following day Churchill took his place in the House. The resolution was officially announced to him, and his short but emotional reply was read out for him.

From time to time, pictures of Churchill or articles about him appeared in the press, but news of his life became rarer and rarer. Churchill found it hard to carry the burden of his years, but he never lost his interest in the press, reading all the London papers, or in literature, where his preference was for historical works.

During these years some interesting memoirs were published by British military leaders who had been under Churchill's command during the war. The historian Arthur Bryant published the diaries of Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke (Lord Alanbrooke). Field Marshal Montgomery published his memoirs. Major General John Kennedy, who had held a prominent position in the Ministry of Defence, also informed the world at large about the view that British soldiers took of Churchill when he was Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. These books contained a varying amount of

criticism of Churchill. He came in for the severest treatment from Alanbrooke. Winston and Clementine were very upset that Alanbrooke's diaries had been published. "It is a bad book, a very bad book," said Churchill.

As his strength gradually ebbed away during his last ten years, Churchill's circle of interests narrowed. He no longer painted. Once a passionate race-goer, he was now content with watching the races on television. His nights at the gambling tables of Monte Carlo were now a thing of the past. He retained his love of the cinema until the very end, and watched films, supplied by various distributors, in his private viewing-room at Chartwell.

Despite his declining strength, Churchill remained far from idle, requiring the services of three sercretaries He also had a personal assistant, provided by the Foreign Office.He received several hundred letters a week, but was able to read only a few himself.

At the end of 1964 Churchill celebrated his 90th birthday. There were no special festivities on this occasion. The state of the old man's health did not permit of any extra strain. Churchill received 60 thousand letters, telegrams and parcels on his birthday. Crowds of Londoners gathered outside his house in Hyde Park Gate. He appeared at the window and greeted them, wearing an outfit recalling the famous wartime siren suit.

Photographs taken on Churchill's ninetieth birthday show that he was then very weak. This was clearly shown by his eyes, which had lost their gleam of intelligence and willpower. Time had taken its tool.

At the beginning of January 1965 Churchill took to his bed with a chill. On 15 January he had a brain haemorrhage and lost consciousness. He remained unconscious for more than a week. His death was announced on 24 January.

The press of Britain, the USA and other countries had probably never paid so much attention to Churchill as they did in the days immediately after his death. *The Times* broke with traditon by publishing a large portrait of Churchill on its front page. It also gave a detailed biography of him. A special memorial edition of *The Times* came out, containing numerous photographs and an extensive review of his life and achievements. *The Sunday Times* wrote of Churchill's death: "This is Britain mourning and the world mourning with her. It is an act of history in itself, something that little children

will remember and tell their grandchildren when they are old.

Sir Winston himself would have appreciated the value of such mourning, both as a tribute by a nation to its great man and as a contrast to the common pettiness of modern life."

The nation gave Churchill a state funeral, equal in its pomp and solemnity to the funerals of kings. Official delegations from all over the Commonwealth and from many other countries attended the funeral. The ceremony lasted several days and ended with the burial of Churchill's remains in a modest cemetery by the old parish church at Bladon, where Winston's mother and father were buried. The cemetery lies next to Blenheim Palace, the residence of the Dukes of Marlborough.

Several years before his death, Churchill had worked out in detail the prodecure for his own funeral and recorded it in writing in his "Funeral Book". He had been concerned with the matter for many years, even while he was still active. Moran recalls a time in 1947 when he heard Churchill tell Clementine that he would like to be buried as a soldier. This wish was honoured.

Long before his death, in 1946, Winston Churchill took steps to evade death-duties. He set up a family trust to care for his children and grandhcildren, and made over the large part of his fortune to this body without paying any tax.

The *Daily Express* noted that Churchill was a rich man. There was no doubt about that. The exact size of his fortune is unknown. Apprehensive of taxes and in accordance with English tradition, he kept silent on this account. It is well known, however, that while still a young man he laid the foundations of his fortune through his publications and lectures. It continued to grow from these sources. Then, after the First World War, he came into a large inheritance. The newspapers reported that since the Second World War Churchill had earned well over £1 million from his books and other publications. Most of the money went to the family trust.

In his will, however, made public after his death, only the sum of £266,054 figured, much of which was accounted for by his London home and stud farm. A third of this sum was left to his widow, and two-thirds to his children. There were smaller bequests to his private secretary and several other people.

Clementine survived her husband by many years. They

lived 56 years together in perfect harmony. Churchill used to say: "I married and lived happily ever after." For this he was largely indebted to her wisdom and tact. Churchill was a difficult man, and Clementine's role as his wife was not an easy one, although she never showed this. She did not try to harness her husband, correct his faults or improve his character, as a less prudent wife might have done in her place. "She did not nag or fuss, but when she spoke he listened." She accepted Winston as he was, and was able to make herself indispensable to him both in misfortune and in triumph. They did not spend much time together: he was always too busy. Clementine never foisted her opinion on Winston, but very often their house would echo to his cry of "Clemmie! " This meant that he wanted to ask his wife something or seek her advice on some point. The management of the household rested entirely on her shoulders, and she worked diligently to ensure that Winston was happy with everything and that nothing irritated him.

She once gave a group of girls her formula for dealing with men: "Never," she said, "force the point. You will gain more by quietly holding to your own convictions and even this must be done with a certain art and humour." As the *Sun* observes, "she practised every word of it."

Clementine was a faithful assistant to her husband. She always took an active part in canvassing and could, if necessary, make a competent speech to the voters. Eleanor Roosevelt concludes her preface to Jack Fishman's biography of Clementine Churchill as follows: "She has had no easy role to play in life, but she has played it with dignity and charm."

Churchill left behind him a son and two daughters. His only son, Randolph, was born in 1911. He tried his hand at the Parliamentary life, but success in politics eluded him. He was somewhat more successful in his journalistic endeavours. After his father's death he undertook the preparation of his biography in several volumes, but only managed to publish the first two volumes before his own death. The work was completed by the historian Martin Gilbert.

Winston Churchill was one of the most popular and celebrated bourgeois statesmen of the 20th century. He achieved fame right at the outset of his political career, and even earlier. His father Randolph had been a well-known public figure for a number of years and his father's renown guaranteed Winston a certain status in society. Subsequently,

his military adventures at the end of the 19th century, which Winston himself was primarily responsible for publicising, advanced his popularity. Churchill's rise to fame was also assisted by his remarkable political career. He twice switched parties in a blaze of publicity, and this naturally made his name a household word. His frequent extravagant escapades were often calculated to attract attention.

No other person has had so much written about him. But no one did more to publicise Churchill than Winston himself. His many books, whose hero was invariably their author, were the best possible form of publicity. A large number of biographies of Churchill appeared even before the Second World War. Much of what was said and written about Churchill at that time was true. A number of authors attempted to give objective appraisals of Churchill the man and the politician.

In 1940, when the Conservatives adopted Churchill as their leader, and the mood of the nation made him Prime Minister, a period of unrestrained hero worship began. The flow of literature about Churchill increased, and its quality declined sharply. The legend of Churchill was born, subsequently to be maintained and publicised by the bourgeois mass media. Eulogies followed one after the other, their authors gasping deliriously as they painted their hero in nothing but the rosiest of hues. Rarely now was anything published which, like Emrys Hughes' book, contained any criticism of Winston Churchill.

There was a good reason for this development. The Conservatives and their powerful propaganda machine spared neither time nor money in their efforts to magnify the name of Churchill and use his glory to counterbalance their failures on the eve of the Second World War. The Conservatives deliberately cultivated the Churchill legend, for their exaltation of their leader gave them the chance to rehabilitate their party and increase its standing in the eyes of the people. In these conditions the truth about Churchill not infrequently receded into the background, making way for these rhapsodical fictions. The British press, cinema, radio and television attempted to convince the nation that Churchill was an outstanding military genius and that he won the Second World War. These assertions ignore the efforts of other nations, and the role of the British themselves pales into insignificance. On 23 November 1974, for example, the BBC

declared that in 1941 Churchill changed the course of human history. The country's bourgeois press sought to persuade readers that in 1940 Churchill "saved the Free World" (the *Sun*, 25 January 1965), while certain historians (e.g. Patrick Cosgrave from Cambridge) contended that "Churchill had defeated Germany by the end of 1940". However, this prompts the question of how Germany, having been defeated in 1940, was able to fight for another four years, since the victory over fascism was only achieved in 1945.

Churchill himself, on the contrary, declared in August 1943: "No Government ever formed among men has been capable of surviving injuries so grave and cruel as those inflicted by Hitler upon Russia." "But," Churchill continued, "...Russia has not only survived and recovered from these frightful injuries, but has inflicted, as no other force in the world could have inflicted, mortal damage on the German army machine." On 9 November 1943, Churchill maintained: "That monstrous juggernaut engine of German might and tyranny has been beaten and broken, outfought and outmanoeuvred, by Russian valour, generalship, and science, and it has been beaten to an extent which may well prove mortal." Finally, on 27 September 1944, Churchill declared that "it is the Russian army that tore the guts out of the German military machine and is at the present moment holding by far the larger portion of the enemy on its front".

The unchecked idealisation of Churchill has given rise to some incensed indignation in Britain, with protests appearing in the press. On 2 August 1974, for instance, the *New Statesman* published a letter from a reader protesting against the paeans sung to Churchill's military genius: "Is it not something of a libel on the people of Britain and the Commonwealth to refer to Churchill, any more than Lloyd George, in the incarnation of warlord, as 'the man who won the war'? "

In 1974 Britain lavishly celebrated the centenary of Churchill's birth. This led to a revival of the Churchill legend that is so assiduously propagated by the Establishment.

The portrayal of Churchill as a great general was largely the result of his own efforts. Since early childhood Churchill was obsessed with the glory won by his ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough. His six-volume memoirs are larded with discussions of his own merits as a military commander.

Churchill was certainly the key figure in directing the

British effort in the Second World War, but the outcome of the decisive battles showed the unsoundness of his strategy of striking at the enemy's fringes and bombing his industrial centres and populated areas. The decisive blows which led to victory were inflicted on the enemy's main fronts, and above all on the Soviet-German front.

The British military leaders in the Second World War were fairly unanimous in their sceptical attitude towards Churchill as a military strategist and tactician. The diaries of Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke and the memoirs of Major General Kennedy and a number of other generals show that many of the decisions on concrete military problems urged by Churchill were opposed by the military experts. "Churchill's critics," writes Kennedy, "sincerely believed at that time that it would be impossible to win the war so long as he controlled our strategy." In an appraisal of Churchill's life, the Labour Party's Richard Crossman wrote: "Churchill regarded himself as a great strategist and the six volumes of his war memoirs were composed largely in order to immortalise his achievements in this field. But I doubt whether the future historians will confirm this assessment, which he only rendered credible by a characteristically partial selection of evidence."

The Churchill legend spread in Britain depicts him as the architect of the Allied victory over Germany, Japan, Italy and their allies. There is no doubt that the Churchill Government's part in the anti-German coalition assisted the achievement of victory. But it is also incontestable that before June 1941 Churchill was unable to find the means towards victory. If Germany had not come up against the Soviet Armed Forces, Britain would have been unable to avoid a crushing defeat, and the question of her winning the war would have been a non-starter.

Conservative propaganda, which lays so much emphasis on Churchill's role in forging the Allied coalition, fails to mention how he endeavoured to destroy this coalition as soon as Britain was out of immediate danger. These attempts sprang from his hostility towards the Soviet Union, and a wish to deprive it of the fruits of victory.

In order to understand clearly the part played by Churchill in the defeat of fascism, we must try to see what it was that prompted him to fight nazism and Italian fascism.

It has been established beyond doubt that Churchill was

sympathetic towards Italian fascism. He made official pronouncements to this effect on several occasions. Nor is there any doubt that Churchill regarded German fascism as a weapon in the struggle against the revolutionary movement in Germany and beyond her frontiers. Churchill was impressed by Hitler's achievements in Germany and hoped that Britain would find a leader like Hitler if she should ever suffer a defeat comparable with the German collapse in 1918. All this goes to show that he was prepared to deal with fascism as such.

Churchill resisted Nazi Germany and fascist Italy not so much because of their fascist regimes as because of their interference with Britain's imperialist interests. It so happened that the war which Britain was waging against Germany and Italy within the Allied coalition merged with the war that many peoples, and above all the peoples of the Soviet Union, were fighting against fascism. For Churchill, it was not so much a war against fascism as a war against Britain's political and economic opponents. In practice, the war against Germany and Italy was at the same time a war against German nazism and Italian fascism. If these forces had not posed a threat to imperialist Britain, Churchill would never have come out against them. Indeed, he never opposed Spanish fascism either when Franco came to power, or during the Second World War or after it had ended.

According to the legend, Churchill's primary service to mankind was his fight for freedom. In this respect, the legend parts company most dramatically with the truth. Churchill's entire career bears witness to the contrary.

In 1957 Churchill wrote that fear and hate are two of the worst faults of human nature. All the evidence shows that Churchill was undoubtedly a brave man himself, both on the battlefield and in his many political skirmishes. However, hate was part of his character. He was sustained by his hatred of socialism, the revolutionary movement and the struggle for national liberation. This hatred was so great that it often prevented Churchill, a man of uncommon intelligence, from acting in accordance with the requirements of logic and common sense.

The 20th century is the century of the revolutionary transformation of society. The beginning and the middle of the century saw two main tendencies in the struggle for liberation mounted by the peoples of the world: firstly, their

struggle for social liberation, which took the form of socialist revolution and established socialism over a third of the world's surface; secondly, their struggle for national liberation, which grew into the revolution that destroyed the colonial empires, including the greatest of them, the British Empire.

In order to establish whether or not Churchill really was a great campaigner for freedom, his attitude to these two main forms of popular struggle has to be ascertained.

It is an indisputable fact that Churchill was irreconcilably opposed to the social liberation of peoples. When Russia accomplished her socialist revolution in 1917, Churchill did more than any other bourgeois statesman to stifle that revolution, to deprive the working people of their power, and to restore the bourgeois system in Russia. When, a quarter of a century later, the peoples of Eastern Europe raised the banner of socialist revolution aloft, Churchill demanded furiously that their struggle for social freedom should be ended by force. It was Churchill, who in 1946 advocated the use of atomic weapons to eliminate socialism and restore the unity of the capitalist world.

Churchill took a similar view of British workers who waged the class struggle and sought social emancipation. When Churchill was in power he did not stop to wonder whether the demands of workers on strike were just or not. He deployed the Army and the police against the strikers without hesitation. Churchill was a dedicated opponent even of the limited reforms that were urged by the Labour Party. He was just as hostile towards socialism in Britain as he was to any overseas variety. That is why the Communist Party of Great Britain and other left-wing groups were so opposed to Churchill (with the exception of a few years during the Second World War). For them, he was always a hated representative of the most reactionary imperialist circles.

Churchill zealously opposed the peoples of colonial and dependent countries who campaigned for their national liberation. In the early twenties he proposed using the latest military hardware to suppress national liberation movements. He stubbornly opposed the slightest lifting of the British colonial yoke in India, let alone its total removal. The peoples of the British Empire achieved political liberation after the Second World War, but they did so in defiance of Churchill, overcoming his stubborn resistance.

Thus, Churchill will go down in history not as a great fighter for freedom, but as a stubborn and aggressive enemy of all the peoples who sought social and national liberation.

In the 20th century the historical role of the masses attained gigantic proportions, and politicians of all persuasions were compelled to take the popular will into account if they wanted to achieve success. Churchill could never understand this historical tendency, and was even less prepared to come to terms with it. To the end of his days he laboured under the delusion that the popular masses merely constituted the backcloth for the actions of the great men who were destined to rule the people, who, in their turn, would blindly submit to them.

Clearly, there is a great discrepancy between Churchill the person and Churchill the legend. We are bound to take this into account in assessing the historical significance of this celebrated bourgeois leader.

At the same time, there can be no doubt that Churchill was a great statesman and an outstandingly gifted man. Nature endowed him with unusual intelligence, a strong will and extraordinary energy. He was brave, purposeful, resolute, versatile and remarkably efficient, and these qualities, combined with his supreme ability in public speaking and in writing, assured him of success in his political career.

Churchill must be credited with certain great achievements. Unlike other leaders of the Conservative Party, Churchill understood the significance of the Nazi threat to Britain in the thirties, and drew the rational and, for a Conservative, brave conclusion that this threat could only be dealt with by forming an alliance with the USSR. In the spring of 1940, Churchill took the most decisive step in his political life when he resolved to continue the war against Germany and to enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union and the USA for this purpose. Britain formed a united front, in which the people came together to resist a deadly enemy, and Churchill was transformed from the leader of the Conservative Party into a national wartime leader.

The people of the Soviet Union fully appreciate and value Churchill's efforts to bring about victory over the fascist Powers in concert with the other members of the anti-German coalition. Over thirty years have passed since the victory over Nazi Germany and her allies. When celebrating the 30th anniversary of Victory in 1975 people in the Soviet

Union thought with profound gratitude of the British soldiers who fought in the Second World War, the British workers who forged armaments both for Britain and for the USSR, the merchant seamen who sailed at their peril to the northern Soviet ports, and the progressive British public who campaigned for an early opening of the Second Front and collected money for the Russian Aid Fund headed by Clementine Churchill.

By taking the right step in the spring of 1940, Churchill saved Britain from certain disaster and gave her the opportunity to end the war victoriously as part of the Allied coalition. This was Churchill's supreme triumph as a statesman; it was his finest hour. Churchill's actions at this time constituted the best safeguard for the interests of the British people in the situation confronting them, they were supported by the nation, and this combined to ensure his success. Churchill's finest hour as a statesman was the hour when he walked with the people.

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